

How to Stay Fervent

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

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

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

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Copyright © 1997

Grace Publications is a ministry of
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	5
---------------------------	---

<i>Chapter 1</i>	7
------------------------	---

A GLORIOUS SALVATION

<i>Chapter 2</i>	10
------------------------	----

TWO ETERNAL JUDGMENTS

<i>Chapter 3</i>	15
------------------------	----

HELL AND HEAVEN

<i>Chapter 4</i>	18
------------------------	----

ON FIRE WITH A VISION

<i>CONCLUSION</i>	22
-------------------------	----

INTRODUCTION

“Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way: yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved” (Isaiah 57:10).

Many people grow weary in the greatness of the way. It is possible for the outward man to become weary serving God while the inward man remains fervent (2 Corinthians 4:16). Weariness comes from our human nature, but fervency comes from the treasure within our earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7).

In my studies, I discovered that *fervency* speaks of four things: having an active, intense love through Christ; kindness that stretches out in grace; persevering with a warm, glowing fire in our hearts; and being sensitive and thoughtful in our identification with mankind.

In 2 Corinthians 7:7, Paul made reference to a “fervent mind.” Christians are exhorted to

have fervent hearts, in 1 Peter 1:22. Also, 1 Peter 4:8-10 tells believers to “have fervent charity,” to “use hospitality”—sweet kindness—”without grudging,” and to minister the same grace they have received “one to another.”

Think of this subject carefully. Because of the hour in which we live, it is vital for us as believers to be stirred up in Christ so that He might reign in our hearts.

May these words inspire you to be intense in your love for one another; move you to be sweet, kind, and sensitive; and cause you to be careful to persevere with a warm glowing fire in your heart.

Chapter One

A GLORIOUS SALVATION

How can we stay fervent? This was a question I asked myself as I flew home from a trip to New England. Several people had given me letters and notes, which I read when I got home. Some were phenomenal testimonies that caused me to think of the beauty of salvation. One way we can remain fervent is to consider what God does for every person who receives Christ.

One letter was from a woman who at one time was going out on her husband, a weekend alcoholic. Later, when she got saved, God enabled her to clean up her act. Then her husband received Christ and, together, they were baptized in our church. Since that time, they have grown as a beautiful family, living for God and serving the Body of Christ. Thinking about what God did for this couple keeps me fervent.

Another letter came from a lady in Portland, Maine, who now has two daughters in our Bible

college. Fear plagued this woman so much that she couldn't go out of her house for months at a time.

"I had terrible fear," she told me. "Not just one fear, but many. Mentally and emotionally they were tearing me up. But when I got saved, the fear left me, and it has never come back. After all those years, I am finally free."

Jesus Paid It All

Think of what Christ did for us when we received Him. He saved us from the penalty of sin. He separated our sins from us and buried them in the sea of His forgetfulness (Micah 7:19). God cannot remember our sins and He will never impute them to us.

If we habitually sin, God chastises us as a loving Father, without condemnation, to bring us back into the proper family relationship. What a thing it is to be saved!

"Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain—
He washed it white as snow."

Oh, how I love that song! If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, those words will leave us broken every time.

Sweet Deliverance

My telephone rang early one morning. It was Jimmy who, at one time, had been a hopeless alcoholic, in jail 30 times and involved in numerous car wrecks. But Jimmy met Jesus. He received Christ into his heart and was delivered.

“I just called to tell you that I have never gone back to drinking, not even secretly,” Jimmy told me. “I have had my weaknesses, but I have never touched a drop of liquor since that night you prayed with me in my living room.”

Testimonies like this one keep me fervent. What Jesus did for Jimmy, He will do for anyone.

Chapter Two

TWO ETERNAL JUDGMENTS

There will be two distinct future judgments in heaven: the Bema Seat judgment of Christ* for the believer, and the Great White Throne judgment for the unsaved. Thinking about these two judgments always keeps me fervent.

The Bema Seat Judgment

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

At times, I go into my study to consider what the Bible says about the Bema Seat. It is the place in heaven where every believer will stand alone before God. This is not the judgment for the unsaved; no one is condemned to hell here.

**The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?*, a booklet available from Grace Publications, covers this subject in detail.

At the Bema Seat, judgments will be made to determine eternal rewards for each Christian. There will be no support groups—every believer will face Jesus Christ in truth, alone.

As I ponder these things, the thought comes: The Bema Seat is not so far away! Very soon, each of us will have our day before God in heaven.

In my mind, I see the members of my congregation standing before God, one by one. Truth will reign at the Bema Seat—not private or public opinion. The Finished Work of Christ will be the absolute premise for this judgment. I will be evaluated on the basis of the categorical doctrine I received and applied, and the measure I identified with Jesus Christ and honored Him will determine my rewards.

What will determine your rewards? Will it be wood, hay, and stubble because you operate in the energy of the flesh? Or, will it be gold, silver, and precious stones because you are constrained by love, motivated to edify others, loyal to Truth, and inspired to win souls? Without excuses or rationalization, without subjectivity or personal reaction, each of us will stand before God. The truth of our motives will be revealed.

Our hearts and minds must remain fervent

in our compassion toward the lost and in our faithfulness to the local assembly. If my fervency toward the Word of God is consistent and my fervency in the Spirit continues to grow, then the Bema Seat will be a glorious moment.

The Great White Throne Judgment

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death [the grave, where the body is] and hell [where the soul is] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:12-15).

Revelation 20:11-15 tells us of the “great white throne” judgment for the unsaved. Rich and poor, “small and great” will stand before God. Jesus Christ will be seated on this throne of judgment. Dear friends, this will be a judg-

ment without grace. Those who are eternally lost will face God as the Lion and not the Lamb.

Recently, as I pondered this, I wept and wept. Why? Because this is real. No matter what the world says or how much people don't believe it, the White Throne judgment *will* happen. This should keep all of us fervent—it should keep us kind and sweet, intense in our love, with sensitivity and thoughtfulness toward the lost. Thoughts of the Great White Throne should keep us fervent and careful to preserve what we have through the blood atonement of Christ.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and *there was found no place for them*” (Revelation 20:11). That line is so sad: no place was found for them. Grace has no place for those who will come before this throne. Yet, Grace died for them. Grace paid for the sins of the whole world. But, those coming before the White Throne will have rejected Jesus Christ and His Gospel of grace.

In hell, the bodies of the unsaved will never be consumed. The body and the soul will remain alive and will spend eternity tormented in the lake of fire.

The reality of the Great White Throne moti-

vates me to stay fervent. It motivates me to pray. This is why we're trusting God that we will be able to knock on every door in our city and to send missionaries into 220 countries. We're not doing it because of a system of works but because of the fervency of our love toward the lost.

If God leads you to be a missionary here in the United States, be faithful and be fervent. If you are called to serve in Europe or the Third World, be faithful in those places. Wherever you go to church, be fervent. There is no time to waste on pettiness. Don't waste time expressing private opinions. If you are a pastor on the foreign field, don't be petty—don't try to control the people who serve with you. Don't compete with other missionaries. That's vanity.

Millions of lost souls are dying, and for them, the White Throne Judgment will be reality. Oh, may God help us to walk in love and sensitivity so that we will redeem the time, making sure we have fervent minds and hearts.

Chapter Three

HELL AND HEAVEN

The truth about hell keeps me fervent. I find it unusual that the average Christian doesn't understand the doctrine of hell. It is a mystery to me how some Christians can neglect hell as a motive for fervency, compassion, godliness, stewardship, and faithfulness.

Jesus made reference to hell as a literal place. In Luke 16:19-31, He spoke of a certain rich man who lifted up his head in hell "being in torments." The man's body was in the grave, but his soul was self-conscious with unsatisfied thirst in hell. We don't know that he led a bad life, but we do know that the rich man was in hell. He had rejected Jesus Christ.

Consider the reality of the flames of hell with its bottomless pit (Revelation 9:2). It's a place where the fire is not quenched and the conscience does not die (Mark 9:43-46). May this reality constrain us to judge that if One died

then we are all dead, and that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves in any form of misery or self-pity (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Let's live unto God, who raised Jesus from the dead. Let us know no man after the flesh, but understand what it means to be new creatures in Christ. May the truth about hell motivate us to be fervent in grace, mercy, and love.

Thoughts of Heaven

Thinking about heaven should also motivate us to stay fervent. It is there we will be with all of God's precious saints. We will meet our precious loved ones who are saved, and enjoy our families forever. There's not a Christian I know who doesn't get homesick for heaven as he grows older. It's not that we want to leave just to get out of the mess down here. We want to live on earth with Christ; yet, we have a desire for heaven. Once we are saved, our purpose is to reveal Christ on earth, but, by God's design, we were made to reign forever in heaven.

Our new life is from heaven. Right thoughts are from heaven. Our conversation is in heaven. Our prayers are through Christ, who is in heaven. Heaven is our provision. Our faith and hope are from heaven. We have been designed to leave

these bodies of weariness, sickness, disease, and death and be made ready for heaven.

Pressing on the Upward Way

I often think about my father, who died when I was three years old. I don't know if he was saved. I don't think he was. I want to believe that he was a Christian, but I have no reason to think that he was. This stirs me up all the more to witness, to evangelize through the printed page and word of mouth. It motivates me to pray and to be obedient. I simply want to tell the story of the marvelous Gospel so people can believe and be saved.

"I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day—
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
'Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.'"

We're heading to heaven; we're pressing on to higher ground. May God stir us to fervently understand this precious place called heaven.

Chapter Four

ON FIRE WITH A VISION

We never know who we are going to touch with our vision. Just by being Christians, God can use us. We don't know where His seed will go or what He will do with it. Christ does the saving, Christ does the convicting, and Christ does the converting.

I am thinking of Molly, a nurse who went to Africa with one of our missionary groups. She was going just to help with the medical aspect of the trip. But the lives of the people she traveled with touched her so deeply that she got saved when she returned home.

Molly has endured some problems in her domestic situation, but she ministers and receives the Word of God so beautifully. She's hungry and thirsty; she studies, she prays, and she wins souls.

"I don't know how I could have lived without what I have now," Molly said to me. "I just

love God so much, and I feel so good about my life with Christ and the Word of God. I have so much love for everybody.”

The folks who went to Africa with Molly were used mightily by God to touch the people there. But their lives did more than that. They touched someone who will live with them forever. Fervency did it. This is what it means to have a vision.

Numbering Your Days

If I died today, I would be absent from my body and present with Jesus. Knowing that keeps my vision fervent. Paul did say that to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). Death is a great coronation for the Christian. It is the glorious consummation of our salvation.

The issues of death belong to the Lord. Death is no longer our enemy. When we die, our souls will not sleep in the grave; the angels will escort us to heaven. If we died today, we would see Jesus Christ face to face and kneel at His feet. Perhaps, Jesus would stand to receive us, as He did when Stephen was being stoned (Acts 7:55-56).

Because death is a physical reality, Satan tries to get people to fear it. Yet, death will come. And when it does, the believer is comforted

with dying mercy. We have a hope unbelievers do not have. For them, the ultimate fear of death must make their hearts tremble.

Our souls can be consistently fervent because with Jesus Christ we know we shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

He Will Come For Us

Knowing that Jesus Christ could come back for us in the Rapture at any moment should also keep us fervent. It may happen during our lifetime; His coming is imminent.

Picture what it will be like when our mortality puts on immortality; when corruption puts on incorruption. He will take us up to meet Him in the clouds, forever to be with Him (1 Corinthians 15:53-54; I Thessalonians 4:17).

As Christians, we have so much that gives us hope. Every hour we can experience new faith, new hope, new encouragement, new comfort, new expectation, new hunger, and new thirst. We may grow weary in the greatness of the way, but even in our weariness, we have faith and hope. The Comforter is here. The Living Word is available. The Holy Spirit is present with us. Jesus Christ is here to keep us fervent.

The Rugged Cross

We must stay fervent in our vision because of what Jesus did for us.

“O that old rugged cross,
so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God
left His glory above,
To bear it to dark Calvary.”

What a precious hymn that is to me. Because of what happened on the old rugged cross, I can also sing:

“What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!”

These songs have stood the test of time and their words make my heart sing in the power of His fervency.

CONCLUSION

God wants His people to take this message to heart. We cannot pass up any opportunity to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We cannot ignore the presence of God. The Word of God must come alive fervently in our hearts.

Satan takes advantage of anyone who does not operate in God's love. The devil gains influence over those who are not sweet in their kindness or sensitive in their thoughtfulness. We must stay fervent with the wisdom of having a warm, glowing fire in our hearts.

Be fervent in your spirit and in your mind. Be fervent among yourselves with a pure heart, and put charity above everything else.

Join me in asking God to keep us fervent. Continue to stir yourselves up with these great thoughts from the Bible. May each of us grow in fervency, learning how to keep our hearts on fire, glowing with the Holy Spirit's power in the character of Christ.