

Lord, Help Me Laugh!

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach 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 a message 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 © 2002

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

LAUGHTER IS ANOINTED

Chapter 2 12

THE JUDGMENT THAT SPARKS JOY

Chapter 3 17

STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD'S JOY

CONCLUSION 21

INTRODUCTION

A good laugh is something everyone really needs from time to time. Scientists have performed conclusive studies that show just how much good laughter does for a person's physical and mental well-being. Most of us have heard the fact that it takes many more facial muscles to form a frown than it does to form a smile.

Face it. Unhappiness is more work.

This is precisely the point God wants to make. Throughout the Word of God, He reveals that the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Real joy involves plenty of laughter. I am not talking about laughing that comes from suggestive humor and foolish jesting. I am talking about laughter that springs from knowing that God is in control and having the freedom to laugh at the things that happen in our human experience.

This booklet is written to express God's view-

point on laughter and to reveal that it can set each of us free from ourselves and from the straitjacket of the world's system.

Chapter One

LAUGHTER IS ANOINTED

“Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow” (Job 8:19).

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

Some Christians are so serious about life that they never allow themselves to get in gear with a joyful, free anointing of laughter. The Bible reveals a number of anointings that God uses to express His character along with His thoughts on a matter, and one of them is laughter.

All of us have seen professing Christians who walk around wearing serious expressions. They honestly think they are obeying the scriptures that say to be spiritually sober (1 Peter 4:7 and 5:8). They always seem to be going through some trial, and they just keep this “face” on. Yet, the word “sober” as it appears in the Greek text of 1 Peter 5:8 (*nepho*) refers to having a spirit that

is calm and collected, even in the face of trouble. And in 1 Peter 4:7, the word for “sober” (*sophrono*) speaks of having our thinking filled with doctrine.

Obviously, people who can remain calm and who are habitually thinking with God know how to laugh at the right time. This is what the Lord meant when He instructed us to weep when others are weeping and to rejoice when others are rejoicing (Romans 12:15)—not to make light of their sorrow, but to be one with them in every kind of situation.

We cannot afford to take ourselves so seriously. God knows when we need to relax and be released. He has divine ability to fill our human capacity with His joy and to reveal amazing happiness in spite of our circumstances.

Books and articles have been written on the power of laughter to improve the chances of healing for the body and the soul. It has been medically proven that when a person laughs, certain chemicals are formed and released in the brain that stimulate a healing process in the body. The studies also conclude that the deeper the laugh, the more oxygen enters the bloodstream to supply tissues with necessary healing properties. (That is why oxygen saturation is

carefully monitored in patients during and after operations in the hospital.)

One publication gave testimonies of over one hundred miraculous physical healings of people who were determined that if they were going to die, they were going to die laughing. Norman Cousins, the former editor of the *Saturday Review*, wrote a book concerning his own illness and the program of laughter that kept him alive long after his doctors had predicted at best. He deliberately exposed himself day and night to humorous scenarios—comedy television and movies, for example. As a result of his personal research, many others have seen the benefits of laughter for physical and mental healing. But thousands of years before his “discovery,” God had already revealed through His Word the healing that comes from laughter.

Smile Awhile

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

“A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken” (Proverbs 15:13).

There is a song some of you have probably

heard. It says, “Smile awhile, and give your face a rest....” God teaches us the doctrine of laughter because He wants our joy to be full. In the majority of instances where we find the word “joy” and “rejoice” in the New Testament, the words refer to a physical and emotional response.

Many people, however, fall into the bondage of self-consciousness and they are not free to laugh. So much is going on in their lives, and they are just so conscious of it all. Watch a Christian who has entered into serious backsliding and you will see a Christian who has a hard time laughing. These are Christians who are bogged down with the details of their lives, and you will have a very hard time to get them to laugh.

One of our assistant pastors portrays a character we call Dr. Lumpleaven. This character is hysterical—so hyperintellectual that he has no sense of humor at all. The sad thing is that some people are really like that. As a matter of fact, the persona of this character is drawn from a man that the pastor met in real life.

Doctrinal Christians possess the God-given ability to laugh even in the most trying situations. I can remember going through a very serious trial, and at one point, all my wife and I

could do was laugh. Certainly, the facts of the situation were not good by sight, and it was a very heavy moment, but we carried no secret subjective depression. We leaned on the knowledge that we belonged to God, that He was in charge of everything, and that we could rely on Him to bring us through valiantly. And He did!

Riding off in my old car, we just broke into laughter. In the midst of this trial, God was showing me that He was in all that was going on. He was making me willing to move on to a new adventure with Him. That is the kind of thing that will bring in joy every time. And, throughout that time, God kept giving us a song:

*Everything's all right in my Father's house,
In my Father's house, in my Father's house.
Everything's all right in my Father's house
Where there's peace, peace, peace!
Everything's all right in my Father's house,
In my Father's house, in my Father's house.
Everything's all right in my Father's house
Where there's joy, joy, joy!*

Chapter Two

THE JUDGMENT THAT SPARKS JOY

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

“But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

“I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (Proverbs 1:24-26).

This passage stirs up many questions. Why does God laugh when He has to judge people? He laughs because of all the years He has loved them even though they kept rejecting Him.

God is love. God is *always* love. More than an expression of His character, God is love. From eternity past, God knew He was going to die for the sins of the entire world. Some, however, rejected His love and His grace. Some refused the opportunities for salvation and stood against Christianity. Now God’s perfect justice includes

His perfect laughter. He is laughing at their false excuses for why they never accepted Him.

This is called the perfect laughter of justice, because for all of their lives, those individuals had opportunities to know God freely and personally. They could have received salvation in an instant, at any time. Then, they would have been saved without a problem. They would have gone to heaven. Instead, they chose to reject the Lord and His free gift of salvation.

Now, if you were to experience constant rejection and cursing and verbal abuse, I am sure you would have some kind of reaction when it all came to an end. Laughter will be God's reaction when He sees this rejection to its final end with this judgment.

The Great Hallelujah

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

"And again they said, Alleluia. And her

smoke rose up for ever and ever.

“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:1-8).

What happens in heaven when the Great Whore Babylon is judged? There is rejoicing. There is more rejoicing in Revelation 19 when the world system, the beast, and the false prophet are brought down. God’s judgment of the evil Babylonian system with its one-world religion, its one-world banking system, and its one-world military brings joy to heaven.

Do you think it is wrong to have a celebra-

tion over judgment such as this? It is not wrong at all. It is simply the culmination of God's complete victory.

For so many centuries Satan, the father of lies, has been able to mock the people and the things of God. And now, in the time of the Revelation, we see how it will all play out. Satan will be exposed, his plan ruined, and his system destroyed before God's servants.

Millions in heaven will sing "Hallelujah" at the sight of this judgment. At last, they will have seen the fulfillment of God's promise to put an end to Satan's program of mockery, lying, and thievery. He sought to steal our souls, and when he couldn't do that, he consistently tried to steal our joy.

God's laughter is absolutely justified. His love justifies His laughter. His grace justifies His right to laugh at those who have committed the sin of blasphemy. The ones He will laugh at mocked Him and grieved the Holy Spirit. Their blasphemy of the Holy Spirit evidenced by their rejection of Christ gives God the right to laugh.

Now, certainly we do not laugh at people who are going through hard times. We cry and weep with them, just as Jesus Christ cries and weeps with them.

The Lord identifies with compassion for them for years and years. But, for those who refuse to recognize that Christ died for their sins and freely receive His gift of salvation, there will come a day when He will have to withhold His grace and enter into judgment. He must do it, simply because they would not accept the truth—that they could live with no condemnation and pass freely from death into life through Him.

Chapter Three

STRENGTH COMES FROM GOD'S JOY

"Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Joy is expressed in laughter, and this joy is food for others. A person who laughs is generally stress-free. Laughter in its purity is an expression of faith that rests in love, an expression of confidence in God, and a revelation of boldness for a Christian who takes the consequences of what happened and still know that God is on the Throne. A Christian who laughs is a Christian who is very secure in God.

The devil desires to create Christians who never laugh. Therefore, Satan sends out demonic armies that are instructed to steal away our joy.

In doing so, those demons seek to sap the spiritual strength of certain believers.

I knew a Jewish man who was born-again who had a gift of conveying the story of Calvary. He became a great evangelist, and many, many people got saved at his meetings.

This man had such a way with his words. His messages painted a picture of Christ's death on the Cross and it would go right to your heart.

Yet, I honestly never saw this man laugh.

Some of his lack of joy came because his father absolutely rejected his testimony, and when he got saved, his father said, "I will never speak to you again." Unfortunately, his father never changed.

Still, I wonder just how much more effective this man would have been if he had allowed God to help him laugh sometimes.

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Much of the stress we encounter is there because we possess no joy. People struggle to overcome certain diseases because they never relax. They will not practice the doctrine of laughter.

The Necessity of Laughter

If you are planning to get married, I suggest you consider marrying someone who knows

how to laugh with you and also knows how to weep with you. There are just so many things that happen, so many serious situations that come about. And whether we could or could not have avoided them, all of us need to experience the freedom and release of laughter, or we will suffer from stress.

Again, this is not about the laughter that comes from suggestive jokes or unkind pranks. I am talking about real joy and laughter that set our spirits free. The physical tension that comes with unrelieved stress robs the body of necessary oxygen as it promotes some chemicals to be released to attack healthy organs.

It is understandable why some movements in Christianity have had an unbalanced approach to laughter. When the Christian experience is crowded with people who just cannot have fun and to whom the work of God is drudgery, some people will look for an obvious alternative. The problem is that for the freedom to last, there must be a healthy balance of categorical doctrine preached and the *whole* counsel of God honored.

Real, godly laughter makes people healthy because it makes people free. As one writer put it: "The more you laugh, the healthier you will

be; if you were blind, God will make you to see!”

CONCLUSION

“And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me” (Genesis 21:6).

Laughter is a serious matter. It should be a very real part of our Christian experience. God enjoys His laughs and we need to enjoy ours too!

Perhaps certain things are preventing you from enjoying the things that God has done for you. Allow Him to speak to your heart. Lay your burdens at the feet of Jesus and let Him bring a great release to you right this moment. You really have nothing to lose but your unhappiness.

God really is in the midst of all that you are going through. He is faithful. He did call you, and therefore, He will give you the strength to perform it. He accomplished this with Sarah by giving her a son in her old age, in Genesis 21. God made her laugh with such joy that she

named her son “Isaac,” which is the Hebrew word for laughter.

Let go and let God help you laugh.