

*In the Fire,
But Not Consumed!*

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 © 2003

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

ISRAEL HAS BEEN KEPT THROUGH THE FIRE

Chapter 2 12

THE WORD OF GOD SHINES THROUGH THE FIRE

Chapter 3 16

THE LORD JESUS REIGNS THROUGH THE FIRE

Chapter 4 20

THE CHURCH REMAINS THROUGH THE FIRE

Chapter 5 24

*INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS WILL STAND THROUGH
THE FIRE*

CONCLUSION 28

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with His chosen people, Israel, God has allowed the things that belong to Him to be tested by fire. The Word of God, tested and proven through fiery trials, shines brighter as the days grow darker. God's own Son withstood every test and reigns supreme as King of kings. The Church continues to go through fiery trials that bring individual believers to the test.

Throughout history, ungodly men have attacked the Word of God. The Church fathers, having suffered tremendous persecution, hid manuscripts. The enemy thought he did away with it, but he did not. The Word of God remains.

The ungodly media attack men of God and the Word they preach. Television programs mock Jesus Christ and the Church. Yet, no one can stop God's people. As this booklet reveals, whatever has its source in God is eternal. The Word will outlive every attack. When placed in the fire, the truth shall not be diminished. It shall

not change. It shall never pass away. We may be in the fire, but we will not be consumed.

Chapter One

ISRAEL HAS BEEN KEPT THROUGH THE FIRE

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

“And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

“And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

“And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

“Moreover he said, I am the God of thy fa-

ther, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God" (Exodus 3:1-6).

History tells us that Moses was a brilliant leader in the Egyptian army when he decided that he wanted neither the pleasures nor the opportunities of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-27). Adopted as an infant by the Pharaoh's daughter, Moses became a part of Egypt's throne. But, his heart for his own people, Israel, made him sympathetic to their suffering. In anger, Moses murdered an Egyptian for beating a slave. Pharaoh sought to kill him, so Moses ran for his life and escaped into the desert wilderness.

We have here a picture of a man who was a member of Pharaoh's family, well liked, highly educated, highly trained, now living with sheep on the backside of the desert.

Through Her Own Folly

For forty years, Moses was tending sheep on the backside of the desert, and in those forty years of performing this task, he was not discontented. He didn't say, "I want to do something better." He took care of the sheep for forty years on the harsh and lonely backside of the desert.

Then one day he saw the bush and the angel

of the Lord that appeared to him in a flame of fire. The fire was burning in the bush, and yet the bush was not consumed. God was in the bush, and right there He began to unfold His plan to Moses, whom He had chosen to deliver Israel out of bondage.

This part of Moses' life is a picture of the nation of Israel today. Just as Moses made some terrible decisions and became an object of disgrace (even to his own people), Israel rebelled against God's authority, and ever since she has been criticized, ridiculed, and persecuted by men and nations around the world.

Israel—the little nation that gave up Bethlehem in 1993—has been threatened by nations that want Jerusalem. But just as God kept His hand on Moses from the time of his birth, God has His hand on Israel. God kept Moses even when he argued and tried to reject God's provision. Likewise, God raised up that tiny nation. He gave Jerusalem and Bethlehem to Israel—and nobody had better try to take those cities away from her. They might try, but they won't get away with it, because Israel belongs to God.

Israel has suffered persecution throughout her history. "Pogroms," defined as the organized massacre of helpless people, have been carried

out repeatedly in an attempt to annihilate her nation. Most recently, the Holocaust was responsible for the deaths of millions of Jews. But through it all, God has supernaturally protected His chosen people, Israel (Zephaniah 3:19-20).*

In the end, after the Church has been taken out of the earth in the Rapture and we are in heaven, many nations and enemies from the north will come down to try once again to destroy the Jewish people. But in that time of the Tribulation, God will cause a supernatural darkness to cover the land, protecting the Jews until He comes back with His Church for the final conflict (Revelation 16:10).

With all the suffering they will go through in the Great Tribulation—through earthquakes and every affliction that will be poured out because of His wrath—God will protect the people of Israel. In the fire, she will not be consumed.

Through the Ages

Everything the Word of God has said about Israel is true. It was an arid barren land when the Word foretold that the desert would bloom with roses in abundance (Isaiah 35:1-2). Because of an irrigation system that began during the time of Jacob, that has happened, and any visitor

to Israel can see it with his own eyes.

The Word of God says that the Jewish people would rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 31:38-40), and they did rebuild exactly where the Bible says. The Word of God says they would fly as the dove from the window (Isaiah 60:8). Today, thousands have resettled in Israel since 1947, hundreds flying in on airplanes. Zephaniah 3:18-20 says that they would come back. Jeremiah 31:8 said they would come first from the north.*

In one day, Israel became a nation; and in one day, at the time of the Second Advent, seven years after the Rapture, they will all be saved (Romans 11:26). They will see His nail-scarred hands and mourn (Zechariah 12:10).

Indeed, Israel has been placed in the fire but she has not been consumed. Time and again, her enemies have tried to destroy her, to blot her out as an insignificant annoyance. But, God promised that she would never be consumed. He promised it, and though Israel has suffered tremendously, she will never be consumed.

**For more about these events and their relevance in the plan of God, read Fulfilled Prophecies from the Bible, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 2000.*

Chapter Two

THE WORD OF GOD SHINES THROUGH THE FIRE

Before God ever created the earth, the Word of God was. Before He ever separated the firmaments, the Word of God was. Before He made vegetation to grow, the Word of God was. Before He made the sun to rise in the morning and the moon to reflect the sun, before He made the stars (Genesis 1:14-16), there was the Word of God. Before the first flower bloomed, before the first tree budded, the Word of God always was. The Word of God has been in the fire, but it has never been consumed.

You can't destroy this Book. The Bible is the Word of God. Jesus said that all of Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16), not just some of it, and it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, and for righteousness. All of it is inspired so that every man and woman may be thoroughly equipped unto divine good.

Man has to live by *every* word of God. We cannot take away a single word, because it is the Word of God. Every single word was before anything that ever was. God's Word has been forever settled in heaven (Psalm 119:89). Heaven and earth will pass away, but His Book always will be.

Through the Test of Time

Some people have a limited capacity to hear the Word of God. Their minds begin to wander if the pastor preaches more than fifteen minutes. But whatever it takes, we must be sure to read the Word and to hear the Word preached.

Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the Word of God. Men of God have cried out, "Hear the Word" (Romans 10:17). "Study the Word and be approved by rightly dividing it" (2 Timothy 2:15). "Beautiful are the feet of those that preach the Gospel and bring good tidings" (Isaiah 52:7).

The Bible says that people who preach the Gospel have beautiful feet! It doesn't talk about the feet of anyone else being so blessed. The Holy Spirit declares that they have beautiful feet as they walk and proclaim the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

Through the Scrutiny of Men

Many prestigious schools that were founded on the Word of God deny the Word of God today, and they will be judged. And unless a believer has a solid foundation of the Word of God, he may not be able to discern between the truth and a lie. The Word of God is pure, and if anybody adds to it, they are liars (Proverbs 30:5-6).

In Psalm 12:6, we read that the Word of God is tried as silver in the furnace of the earth and purified seven times, signifying the application of the Finished Work. Then it says in verse 7 that the Word of God shall be kept and preserved from this generation forevermore.

Thomas Paine did everything in his power to hurt the Word of God. But after he died, the very printing press that he used to propagate his atheism was used to print Bibles. No one can touch the Word of God. Indeed, it has been in the fire, but God's Word will not be consumed.

Through the Rationalization of the Flesh

In this day and age, Satan comes in with his instincts to take over man's instinctive nature. Through demons and the old sin nature, Satan takes over the emotions. He tries to take over the capacity of men so they have a capacity for

pornography but not a capacity for God.

By the way, anyone who goes after pornography cannot be sure they are going to heaven, because they are living in adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28), and no adulterer will inherit God's Kingdom. Besides that, no one who fornicates will inherit God's Kingdom (Galatians 5:19-21). Unless they repent, no one who practices these things can be sure they are going to heaven. If they are Christians and they do not get right, God may take them home early.

Do you know why I believe that? The Word of God says it. I am a Christian who believes in the whole counsel of God. I believe in ALL the Word of God (Acts 20:27). I believe it is all inspired, that it is all profitable. A man who is right with God will teach and preach and minister *every* Word of God and then impart its life to others by the Holy Spirit.

No one can stop it. Governments can forbid it, but no government can stop the Word of God. You can put the Word of God in the fire but it will not be consumed.

Chapter Three

THE LORD JESUS REIGNS THROUGH THE FIRE

Being born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14) in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2), growing up as a carpenter's son in Nazareth, Jesus Christ did not come with the appearance of royalty. In fact, because it was known for its poverty, Nathanael said to Philip in John 1:46, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (To which Philip replied, "Come and see!"). The Son of God was constantly placed in the fire, yet He was not consumed.

The Word of God says that when King Herod put out the proclamation to kill all the male babies, the baby Jesus was supernaturally taken out of his way. Many were killed, but He was not consumed.

Jesus came into the world that He created, but nobody knew Him. He came unto His own, and they did not know Him (John 1:10-11). His

half-brothers and sisters didn't believe in Him until the Resurrection (John 7:5). In the town where He grew up, the people barely acknowledged Him and He was not accepted (Matthew 13:53-58). Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, was in the fire all of His life but He was not consumed.

Through Rejection

After He was arrested, Jesus went through six civil trials and six religious trials. He didn't do anything wrong, but He was found guilty of blasphemy. When they said of Jesus, "He is guilty of death" (Matthew 26:66); when they battered His body (Matthew 26:67); when they plucked the hairs from His beard (Isaiah 50:6); when He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and we hid our faces from him and esteemed Him not (Isaiah 53:3)—these were times when Jesus was constantly in the fire. But glory be to God, none of these things could stop Him, and He was never consumed.

Men said "He is guilty," and God said to His own Son, "I too declare You to be guilty of the sins of mankind."

When the Lord Jesus could not carry His

own cross up the hill, a precious man in the crowd carried it for Him. They nailed Jesus to that cross, and for three hours the sky was pitch black.

If we look at Matthew 27:46, it was as if God said, "I can't fellowship with You. I can't have a thing to do with You. I am turning My back on You, because You became sin, though You have never sinned. All the sins of the world are now on You. You are guilty!" So He was crucified. Then He was buried. Then He went into hell—in the fire but not consumed.

Through Death

Then the Word of God says in Matthew 28:1-6, Mark 16:4-6, Luke 24:2-6, and John 20:1-8 that the disciples went to the tomb, but they didn't find His body. The Bible says that an angel removed the stone and then lovingly (and laughingly) sat on the stone that he removed (Matthew 28:2).

The angel just sat there! The tomb was empty and the Savior was resurrected. The glorified Savior walked with men. He walked through closed doors. He was resurrected after He had been in the fire. Men attacked His character. They persecuted Him. They lied. They falsely

accused Him and beat Him up and did everything to mock Him. And yet, all the while He was in the fire, He was never consumed.

That is why my Christianity is such a serious matter. That is why I put God first—before social events, before anything. That is why God is first in my life.

Chapter Four

THE CHURCH REMAINS THROUGH THE FIRE

Throughout the ages, the Church of Jesus Christ, the New Testament Church, has been in the fire. Many today are being persecuted for their faith, and the devil is trying to keep people in fear and prevent them from going forward in Christ. But Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

The Church has withstood everything under the sun. I am talking about the true Church today. I'm talking about born-again Christians that make up local indigenous assemblies throughout the world. I'm talking about churches that believe the whole Bible, that believe in the Blood that was shed to pay for their sins, that believe that men must be saved. They believe in the White Throne Judgment for the unsaved at the end of time. They believe in the

Bema Seat evaluation for Christians. They believe in hell, that it is real and literal at this very moment. They believe that heaven has golden streets and gates that are made of pearl (Revelation 21:21).

The Church is Christians everywhere who believe in purity and forgiveness and cleansing that comes from having God's righteousness on their record. I'm talking about Christians who, the moment they believed by faith, sixty-eight things happened to them spiritually.* I'm talking about the Church that for all these years has been hated and despised, and yet, she has never been consumed.

The greatest institution on the earth today is the Church of the living God. It is not businesses, though we need businesses and we thank God for them. It is not the school system, though we need schools and the education they provide. But the greatest thing on the earth today, according to the sixty-six books of the Bible, is the Church of the living God, the Church of Jesus Christ.

Through Persecution

When a church is persecuted, the attack is not just against the pastor. The whole church is

persecuted. The leadership may be targeted, but the work, the convictions, and the spiritual prosperity of individual believers comes under attack as well. Although we know that the apostle Paul spent much of his time in prisons, he wrote many passages to honor and encourage the churches that suffered and even risked their lives to stand for the truth of the glorious Gospel. (See Romans 16; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 2:19-21, 3:14, 4:16.)

You can put the Church in the fire, and nothing can touch it. Thank God that we are ready to go to heaven, ready to be absent from the body and present with God, never to see death (John 8:51), indeed, never to die (John 11:25-26). Thank God that we have a hope, a joy, a faith, a belief that goes beyond anything in this earth. We are part of the living, loving Church of Jesus Christ, and we have the living, loving Word of God. Put us in the fire and see what happens!

Through Impossible Situations

The three Hebrew boys were put in the fire, and the fire was turned up seven times hotter (Daniel 3:10-27). But looking into the furnace, the king said, "This is strange. They don't seem to have a thing wrong with them. And look—

there's a *fourth* man in there! This is impossible," Then he said. "I had better get to know their God."

When they came out, they had no smell of fire. Their hair wasn't singed. Their clothes were not burned. Notice that only three men came out of the flames. The fourth man stayed right in the furnace. So when you or I get thrown in the fire, He will be there to fellowship with us. We may go through the fires, but as believers, we will not be consumed.

**Be sure to read, What Happened When You Received Christ? By Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1999.*

Chapter Five

INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS WILL STAND THROUGH THE FIRE

The last thing that goes through the fire and can never be consumed is each and every born-again Christian. A Christian can fail, but if he is truly saved, then he can never be consumed. Still, he must rebound from his sin by confessing it before God, isolating it, getting up, and going forward, or his sin will consume him.

Along with the principle of rebound, today we must learn to live by every single Word of God. Then, when we fail, we don't have to ask for God's forgiveness. When we confess our sin, He does cleanse us and forgive us. The Bible doesn't say to ask Him. It just says, "Confess your sin and forsake it, and you will find mercy" (see Proverbs 28:13).

It is impossible for a born-again Christian to lose his salvation. Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life, and no man can pluck them out of

My hand." God, in His mercy, may take a believer home early if he continues to practice a sin and will not repent. He is taken early, but he goes home to heaven, and he is still happy. He will not have the degrees of happiness he could have, but he will never be unhappy.

Please understand that when a believer dies and it seems early, only God knows his age, spiritually speaking. God plucks the corn when it is ripe, and many great servants who lived exemplary lives as Christians have died at what we would call a young age.

The believer might fall into the fire of failure. He may make mistakes, he may fail, and he may sin, but when he rebounds, he comes forth cleansed and he blesses people. Certain people may reject him, but ultimately, you can put the believer in the fire but he can never be consumed.

Through Personal Challenges

In our church, besides services that are held three times a week, we have the privilege of hearing the Word preached every day of the week, both in Bible college and in our fellowship hall at noon. Why is that? It is because the Bible says we are to hear. That doesn't mean you have to come when you are legitimately busy. People

can't come to everything. But as far as the Word goes, we have the opportunity to hear the Word of God daily. You can read it at home. You can hear it on radio. You can hear a tape a day at home. What is important is that you are receiving categorical Bible doctrine every single day.

Aren't you happy that the Church is alive and well and that Satan is fighting mad and angry? Aren't you happy that you can pray and God hears you? If you don't think that's true, look at the lives of believers around you and see for yourself that God is a prayer-answering, miraculous God.

We are going forward with the love of God, the compassion of God, the faithfulness of God, and the steadfastness of God. We are going forward with the whole Word of God hidden in our hearts. We are going forward with spiritual instincts, spiritual emotions, and spiritual minds. We are going forward, because there is more truth in the Word of God than anywhere in the entire world—and you had better believe it, because if you don't, you are living in a false understanding of reality.

Through the Lies from Hell

The devil and the demons of hell were pre-

mature in thinking that the Church would have its demise. They thought that real Christians were not going to make it.

In Acts chapter 5, after Peter and the other apostles were miraculously released from prison, they continued to preach the Word of Life in the temple. The high priest and his council of the Pharisees and Sadducees were outraged and brought them again to be judged for their offense. But Gamaliel, a well-respected member of the council, noted how that several false sects were brought to nothing after a time. Then he went so far as to say, “Let them alone, for if this work is of men, it will come to nought; but if it is of God, no man can overthrow it” (see Acts 5:38-39).

Well, nearly two thousand years have gone by, and though churches can self-destruct, no one can stop a Christian. Therefore no one can stop the Church. So don’t try to do it through gossip and slander and digging up what has been covered by the Blood. It won’t work. The God of heaven and earth is reigning, and His purpose—to seek and to save the lost—will be accomplished through weak and sinful men who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior.

CONCLUSION

If you could talk with your loved ones and your friends in heaven, what do you think they would say to you? I believe they would say “Draw near to God through the Word, and do not forsake assembling with the local church. Sacrifice to hear the Word preached by a man of God. Love the Word, embrace it, and don’t deviate from it.”

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of burning (Isaiah 4:4). He convicts us of truth, exposing our sin in the light of His righteousness. Then He comes along side to comfort us, giving us an abundance of hope as we face the fiery trials of our faith.

Father, thank You for Your protection, Your provision, Your power, and Your peace. Help us to stay focused by keeping our eyes on You and not being distracted by the heat of the flames. We pray for those who are experiencing persecution today, and we pray that they will keep their eyes on the Fourth Man in the furnace. In Christ’s precious name, Amen.