

Overcoming Fear

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 © 2001

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	5
-------------------------------	---

<i>Chapter 1</i>	6
----------------------------	---

TESTS AND TRIBULATIONS

<i>Chapter 2</i>	11
----------------------------	----

WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW?

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

RESPONSES FOR VICTORY

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

INTRODUCTION

A recent newspaper article revealed that a certain county in Maryland has one practicing psychiatrist for every one hundred residents. It is a fact that most psychiatrists are extremely busy. "People have so many fears and anxieties they can't deal with," was the explanation of one government official for this staggering statistic.

Obviously, psychological torment has taken over in many segments of society, and it has no doubt affected even many in the Christian community. For Christians, however, there is an answer, a way to overcome these fears and anxieties. That way is found in applying the wisdom of the Word of God through the power of God.

In this booklet, we will examine how each of us can experience the power of God to overcome fear and anxiety. Our prayer is that everyone will enjoy the victory as God's love is shed abroad in our hearts.

Chapter One

TESTS AND TRIBULATIONS

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

“And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit] which is given unto us” (Romans 5:1-5).

God allows trials to test what we have learned from the Word of God. They represent opportunities to experience what we have received. In the midst of these tests, the questions I must ask myself are these: Have I caught what I have been taught? Have I believed and received?

God tests believers to solidify what we have learned from the Word of God by applying it, or to show us where we are lacking in trusting the Word of God.

“The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts” (Proverbs 17:3).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

God tries our “reins,” which speaks of our emotions. God doesn’t want the believer’s life to be ruled by emotions, but He wants our emotions to complement our faith walk with God.

It is important to understand the difference between falling short and falling into failure. A runner may train diligently and earnestly, he may run with all of his energy, but then something happens and he doesn’t win. He did all that he could do, but it wasn’t enough, and he just fell short of the goal.

When we live by our emotions only and not by faith-obedience to the Word, we will fall short of living by every word of God. This will even-

tually lead to falling into failure.

God wants every Christian to experience, by grace through faith in love, what he has been taught.

Remember this: You will be tested on what you have learned and received from the Word of God. It may take some time, but you will experience a trial. As a husband or wife, everything you have been taught about having a godly marriage shall be tested to see if you will apply the truth in your marriage. Whatever the trial, if you react negatively, you fall into Satan's trap. By responding positively, you fall into the grace of God, and grace becomes your teacher (see Titus 2:11,12).

Experience and Expression

In Romans 5:3 and 4, we read that tribulation works in us patience, and that works in experience, which then gives us hope. "Experience" is *dokime* in the Greek, and it means that what I have learned I will be asked to express and appropriate through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Where would we be in eternity if we could not experience what we have been taught?

Our testing starts with obedience to the very basics, such as faithfulness to attend church ser-

vices (Hebrews 10:25). A Christian who is faithful as a representative of Christ to attend church services has caught what he was taught in this area. He has received what he has believed.

Our Worst Enemy

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

Fear is one of the most difficult things for anyone to deal with. When a person falls into fear, he falls into torment. When this happens, love is grieved, and it is not experienced nor expressed. He cannot experience fellowship with God’s love. Fear can do so much to hinder a Christian.

Every one of us can experience a major victory over fear by receiving what we believe. Fear has been the worst enemy for so many people. In a very crucial counseling session, a man said to me, “I am not a good father. I am not a good husband. I have no confidence in my future because of my past.” This man was living in fear and was resigned to failure. After counseling, he understood that he did not have to live in the fear of past failures.

Many people live in indescribable agony because of the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). Every person has moments of experiencing this fear, but some spend their lifetime in bondage to it. There is no reason for the fear of death to control us, because we have been delivered by our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ who conquered death. In 2 Corinthians 5:8, the Word of God says that when we die, we are present with the Lord.

Fear, when properly understood and recognized, should always cause us to run and hide in love (1 John 4:16). Love always casts out fear. We love God because He first loved us, and His perfect love always casts out fear.

Chapter Two

WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW?

Tribulations should be expected in the Christian life. Some of the tribulations the Scriptures speak of are physical illnesses (John 5:5), human weaknesses, deficiencies in knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:7), inner poverty or incapacity (Galatians 4:9; Romans 8:3), and physical poverty (Acts 20:35). We will be tried in tribulations for what we know, tested on what we have been taught, and honored for the way we come through the tests. It is so vital to understand that tribulations are allowed by God.

If I hear a message on the doctrine of forgiveness, I will be tested until I experience forgiveness. If I hear a message on manners and hospitality, I will be tested until I experience hospitality and manners. If I hear a message on patience, I will be tested to see if I know about patience. I will be tested to see if I know what I have been taught so that I can express it in my

personal experience.

Experiencing Every Word

The ultimate purpose of the Christian life is to experience in a practical way every Word of God in life, light, and love. When we fail, we purpose to rebound and refuse to fall into the traps of fear, negativity, and reaction. We must begin to understand the Word of God through our experiences personally with God. Instead of withdrawing into self, sublimation, or emotion, we experience the very life of God in a personal, practical, intimate way.

Time and time again, things happen that cause people to fall into the trap of fear. I understand because I have been attacked by fear myself—and it is very real. In those situations, however, I have learned to lead the fear into love so that love can cast out my fear. The fears are taken over by God's grace as my teacher, and I can enter into faith rest and begin to enjoy a number of godly experiences.

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Our experiences must be according to the Word of God, using the knowledge we have in the order that the Word of God presents it. Too many Christians enter into

confusion instead of the application of the Word in personal experience, because they do not follow God's order. When divine order is not executed, confusion takes over and we lack godliness. As a result, we have no understanding of God's purpose for allowing temptation and testing.

The Power of Perfect Wisdom

"Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me" (Psalm 119:98).

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

The greatest victories we experience are the result of the provision and protection given to us by God. He supplies wisdom that is greater than that of our enemy through what we are taught from the Word of God. Not only do we have a wisdom that is greater than our enemy's, but the psalmist says we have a wisdom that is beyond that of godly men of old (Psalm 119:100), because of the practicality of the Church Age and the dispensation of grace (see Ephesians 3:2).

The work of Redemption is finished. We are perfect in Christ, and we have His perfect wis-

dom. We are seated above, hid in Christ, and there is nothing to fear.

Chapter Three

RESPONSES FOR VICTORY

“And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

“And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

“Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

“And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

“And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

“And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

“So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

“And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

“For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper” (Luke 14:14-24).

In Luke 14:19, a man wanted to be excused from the banquet so he could prove his oxen. He did not want to obey in faith to take advantage of the opportunity. An opportunity is never the issue; the issue is how I respond to opportunity. When anything comes up in my life, the key is what I do in my experience before God.

Hebrews 5:13 refers to a “babe” who is unskillful in the word of righteousness. This means he is unskillful in the experience of righteousness, because he lacks experience in the Word of

God. He has knowledge, but he cannot skillfully execute spirituality and put his knowledge into practice when opportunities come his way.

Magnify Christ

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:20-21).

Everyone will face death. Many face physical and financial problems at some time. Others encounter persecution and division. Still, we can all experience what we have been taught in all of these situations.

In Philippians 1, the apostle Paul told us what he learned as he magnified Christ in his body. He said, “I understand that I must experience what I have been taught. If I do not experience what I have been taught, then I am really not appropriating the wisdom of Jesus Christ.”

Apply the Truth

“Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.

“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

“For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD” (Proverbs 8:33-35).

“Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end” (Proverbs 19:20).

Wisdom—the application of the knowledge of God in our personal experience—calls us to hear instruction, be wise, and refuse it not. In order to be wise, we must hear God’s counsel. We must receive the testimonies of God’s truth in the discipline of instruction in the school of wisdom.

Everything that is tested at the Bema Seat of Christ will relate to what we experienced here on earth (1 Corinthians 3:13). The fire of eternity will try our experience. Did we experience unconditional love? Did we experience forgiveness? Did we experience purity? Did we experience refusing to listen to an evil report? The answers to these questions will determine our eternal rewards. Why? Because, God glories in the fact that we express what we have been taught in our experiences.

The devil has no more power over my expe-

riences than what I give him. His power is restricted to those areas where I lack the wisdom to appropriate the Word of God when he comes my way. But when I confront him with faith in the pure Word of God, Satan will not only flee, but he is totally defeated, and I experience victory over his temptations.

The Beauty of Divine Diversity

“And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

“And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full” (Deuteronomy 6:10-11).

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.

“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and

hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

God has given us much to enable us to reign in the diversity of divine provisions. We didn't bring anything into this world, and we will carry nothing out of it. So many people think they are rich, but they really have nothing. The anxiety of this life has pushed them into temptation and snares. Many people are drowning in destruction because of foolish and hurtful lusts at work within.

God will supply our needs according to His riches in glory. If He wants to make us rich materially in this life, then He will. We just have to be very careful when we have such riches. Some people seldom come to church because they say, “I am busy making money right now.” That is just fear at work. They are afraid that the opportunity to make money will not be there if they take time for church. The money isn't the prob-

lem. The coveting of money and the fear that comes with it are the real issues.

We overcome fear—in material things, in impurity, and in temptations—through managing our minds and emotions by the Word in the grace of God that is God's gift to us.

CONCLUSION

God wants us to understand that He allows tribulation into our lives in order to work experience in our walk with Him. This experience leads to hope. And with that hope comes the love of God, which the Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts.

When love abounds in our hearts, there is no room for anything else. Fear gets crowded out. The fear of failure and the failure that can cause fear are no longer in control. Fear has been shown the door and cast out.

All of this happens when we catch the Word of God in faith and we receive what we believe. Then, in practical ways, we will personally experience what we have been taught. This represents the ultimate way to glorify Christ through our lives.