

Truth Speaks in the Streets

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 © 2005

From a message preached on January 13, 1988

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
--------------------	---

Chapter 1	7
-----------------	---

THE TEARS OF TENDER HEARTS

Chapter 2	11
-----------------	----

DEVELOP ULTIMATE CONVICTIONS

Chapter 3	16
-----------------	----

JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST STAND

CONCLUSION	21
------------------	----

INTRODUCTION

The reality of traffic jams hits home for far too many of us. Often, in my own travels, I have found myself caught at a standstill on Interstate 95 during the morning rush hour. And what do we see in these tie-ups? Generally, we see people frustrated because they aren't going anywhere. The real problem is that some of those folks immediately start seeking out detours. This gets them out of the way but very often creates even more traffic troubles.

How does this relate to Christianity? According to Isaiah 59, truth is fallen in the street. The Lord Jesus Christ is not being lifted up where He can be seen clearly and draw men to Him. As a result, people live deeply in sin because they don't have the truth to guide them.

Too few of us are carrying the truth to the streets and letting wisdom cry out to the lost and the dying. My hope is that this booklet would encourage you to pick up the truth and

lift up the banner of Jesus Christ's love so that the world can see Him. Too many streets are jammed with the traffic of wrong thinking and wrong motivation. Let's get the road clear, so that truth can flow freely.

Chapter One

THE TEARS OF TENDER HEARTS

“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke 19:41).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

“Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

Jesus approached Jerusalem and began to weep over the city. I think of all the pictures of our Lord that are described in the Scriptures, this is among the greatest. Imagine the God of the universe, the God who made the stars, the moon, and the sun, the God of all things in our creation—God almighty walking in the form of a man and weeping over a city as He looks down at it. He wept and groaned over Jerusalem.

This is the reality of divine weeping. One young pastor who was touched by a recent message told me, “The longer I am in the ministry, the more I want God to break me and make me tenderhearted. It is the only way to release the true nature of God.”

Bob Colby, one of my dearest friends and a great pastor in Maine, is almost always brought to tears in the pulpit. Some may call that emotionalism. I don’t call it that at all. I call it an appreciation for all that Jesus Christ has done. Sometimes you so appreciate the Lord that your emotions respond in this way.

Paul, in Acts 20, said that he wept day and night for three years. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet. This kind of weeping is much different from weeping because you feel sorry for yourself or your circumstances. I am not suggesting that a person has to be weeping in order to be spiritual. I am simply speaking of brokenness and humility that revives a heart and makes it very tender toward what the Lord wants to do (James 4:10).

Humility takes the low place. It is willing to take the last seat. It is willing to have the least position. An attitude of brokenness and humility gets God’s attention, and He says, “I will re-

vive that kind of heart.” This type of heart is only established when we look to Jesus, who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Revival speaks of beginning to understand who God is and what He has done. We get to know who He is as His Word indwells our hearts, our frames of reference.

The Spirit, Not the Letter

“Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word” (Psalm 119:154).

The quickening power of God is found in His Word. A godly preacher gets up in the pulpit, opens the Bible, and shares from his heart. As a result, his soul and the souls of his congregation are quickened. The Holy Spirit ushers in the presentation. That is what a revival is at the simplest level of truth.

And very often when this happens, there are tears.

Some can talk the letter, but that is simply the flesh at work, and the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63). A person can memorize the whole New Testament, graduate from Bible college, and have all kinds of truth contained in him. Yet, if that truth is communicated in the flesh and the presentation is simply the presentation of the

letter, then that letter kills.

The words Jesus spoke are Spirit and they are life. His words bring revival. His words quicken us.

Some moves of God have been marked by miracles and gifts. Real revival, however, cannot be discovered this way. Real revival is revealed in transformed hearts and transformed lives. Where the Spirit of the Lord, there is liberty.

We are changed from glory to glory. How? By the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God and quickening us. In this process, God develops in us a capacity that is categorically ascribed to a specific purpose for His plan in any situation.

God establishes truth in me so that my capacity is equal to my circumstance. An unbelievable thing may happen to me, something I am not really prepared to face. Yet, the Word, quickened by the Holy Spirit in my humble soul, enlarges me to experience God's life and fulfill His will in that circumstance, that relationship, or that trial, in the plan of God.

Chapter Two

DEVELOP ULTIMATE CONVICTIONS

I must never digress from the purpose of the specific plan that God initiates providentially in my life. I must never deviate from growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ's lordship in any aspect of His plan. If I do, I will live in a self-destructive carnality in the terrible sequence of defeat and death.

As we hear words from God, those words produce in us an ultimate response. The Bible causes a response. I cannot hear the Word without experiencing some ultimate response. My response may be positive. Or, my response may be negative. I may respond in passivity. But I will respond somehow, some way.

The ultimate response should bring me to an ultimate conclusion. The ultimate conclusions that come from my ultimate responses should produce ultimate convictions that are personal.

If my ultimate conclusions do not lead to ultimate convictions that become personal, then the ultimate conclusions can affect my soul in dangerous responses.

Take the passage in Luke 19, for example. Jesus was weeping over Jerusalem saying, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke 19:42).

If I carefully consider those words, allowing the Holy Spirit to quicken them in my heart, then something happens. When I am confessed up to date and reckoning on God’s holy presence, then the Lord brings in a personal conviction. It is that every soul needs love, that every soul needs salvation, and that every soul needs to hear the Gospel.

This scene from the Word should produce a conviction in me, and it will do so if the Holy Spirit quickens my soul and quickens the Word that is in my heart.

Wisdom Is Needed on the Streets

“Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets” (Proverbs 1:20).

“Should thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets?” (Proverbs

5:16).

“...Go your ways out into the streets...”
(Luke 10:10).

“And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night”
(Genesis 19:2).

“And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

“Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment” (Isaiah 59:14-15).

The Word says so much about going to the streets with the truth. This conviction is so lacking in the churches of Jesus Christ today. The eye loses its singularity. The heart becomes a bit divided. The mind becomes a little clouded. All of a sudden, we are not being quickened by the Spirit. The Word of God is not producing convictions that are personal. Truth is not being appropriated.

Isaiah 59:14 describes this condition. Judgment—God’s justice—is standing afar off. In

other words, doctrine is no longer a standard for decision making. Doctrine has fallen in the streets, and justice must stand back.

Wisdom cries in the streets. Men and women who need truth are in the streets. Jerusalem was full of people who needed the truth. But apart from Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God, that truth fell in the streets. Very few will pick it up.

Any ministry in the world can preach the Gospel and still not see it produce an ultimate response. Doctrine can be taught and not produce transformation. The soul has no power to quicken the mortal body. Knowledge does not produce love that transcends human love. The mercy that rejoices against judgment is not there. The grace that goes beyond the law is missing. There is no faith-rest that goes beyond stress and tension.

The streets are full of relative righteousness, human righteousness, and self righteousness. Where is Truth? Where are believers who are so humble and so contrite that the Word produces supernatural life in them?

What's the problem? Justice stands afar off in so many hearts. Doctrine is not governing the thoughts and intents of many believers. These Christians have not allowed ultimate responses

to produce ultimate conclusions that establish ultimate convictions. The Word is what changes souls and brings God's presence into situations.

Chapter Three

JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST STAND

God's justice must be understood in its several forms.

There is God's relative justice, which has to do with His essence, His nature, His omniscience, and His knowledge. Then, we have God's absolute justice under which He upholds Himself against the violations of His holiness. Next, there is God's rectorial justice, which is a form that few understand. Simply, this form of justice concerns the institution of His righteousness and righteous laws that establish rewards and penalties.

The distributive justice of God involves the meting out of just rewards. The remunerative justice is the justice by which He constantly expresses His love because of the price Jesus paid at Calvary. God's retributive justice regards His expression of wrath.

Because of what happened at Calvary, God's relative justice now is satisfied. At the Cross, mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other, according to Psalm 85:10. The death of the Innocent One in our place and the blood that He shed now cover the sins of the entire world. Truth has sprung from the earth.

God the Father could now say, "Receive the harlots who believe. Receive the murderers who believe. Receive the drug addicts who believe. Receive the self-righteous who come unto Me and believe, not in their own works but in My Finished Work."

Justice has been accomplished. A way was made for us to be accepted into the Kingdom as we call upon the Son of God, receive His free gift of salvation, and turn from our wicked ways through grace. We are received just as if we had never sinned.

This truth, however, is not taken to the streets. This truth is really not practiced as it should be in the church. A Christian fails and repents, but some do not honor the doctrine of recovery. Justice, which has been satisfied, stands afar off in this situation and truth falls into the street. Equity cannot enter. The integrity of the

Finished Work is equity.

It goes like this. You sin against God. You repent. You sin again, and then repent. God forbid, you sin again and you repent. Then, a great act of mercy takes over your life and you receive power. God begins to work something into you, and you don't do the things you used to do.

Still, there are Christians who judge according to relative justice instead of God's absolute justice. In doing so, these believers allow Truth to fall in the street. According to His absolute justice, God cannot impute sin to you. You are seated in heavenly places. You stand or fall before Him, and Him alone.

Appropriate the Word

Wisdom cries out to us: "Appropriate truth! Appropriate mercy. Appropriate forgiveness. Appropriate love." But judgment—the justice of God—gets turned away backward. The integrity of grace, the integrity of mercy, the integrity of forgiveness, the integrity of peace, and the integrity of God's healing power remain fallen in the streets.

The truth falls in the street and there is a traffic jam. Truth blocks the streets, but people keep detouring around it. Instead of facing the facts

God gives them, so many detour into self-righteousness, comparative righteousness, human righteousness, and religious righteousness. These dead-end roads carry people away from the truth that is crying out. Truth is allowed to fall and block out the equity of God's Finished Work.

The difference between forcing a detour and leading someone to a decision is very often the content of the message being preached. The application of life is the issue. Ministries may preach very nearly the same thing, but only God's Spirit quickening man's humble soul through the Word of God can reveal a vicarious atonement, a ministry of reconciliation, and the reality of wholehearted redemption.

What we need in America and in the world are more believers who will pick up the truth and clear the traffic jam. There are many doing this very thing throughout the world, in our ministry and in many others.

Let's pray and pick up the truth. Let's clear the street of envy, frustration, comparison, competition, and sublimation—all of that. Let's lift up the truth so people can see Jesus Christ clearly. May our lives reflect Him. May we elevate Him so distinctly. Let's us honor Him thor-

oughly and completely. Let's exalt the Lord so fervently that the people in the street can walk in truth.

CONCLUSION

Revival is the Holy Spirit taking the Word of God in the humble soul and quickening God's life so that wisdom is heard in the streets. Circumstances may change, or they may not, but transformation is already underway. We are all right with God so, even when tragedy comes in, we reveal His nature.

Revealing God's nature when everything leaves us, that's revival. Revival isn't material prosperity. Revival is soul prosperity. The plan of God takes cares of everything. Let's continue to labor together in this area and wherever we are. Let's set the Lord before our faces every morning, every noon, and every night.

We cannot afford to focus on situations and people. We must focus on the Lord. Our thankfulness and gratitude should be great because we are alive and we are well and the Lord is watching over us and guiding us.

Let's thank Him for everything and praise

His holy name, lifting Him up as we walk through the highways and byways where Christ leads us to seek the lost. Let's lift up the truth of forgiveness, the truth of mercy, the truth of patience. Let's lift up the truth of the Finished Work.