

# *The Sin of Discontentment*

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

*BEING LED BY THE LIGHT OF GOD*

*Chapter 2* . . . . . 11

*CONTENTMENT BRINGS GREAT GAIN*

*Chapter 3* . . . . . 16

*FIND VICTORY IN A VISION*

*CONCLUSION* . . . . . 20



## INTRODUCTION

The desire for change rules much of society. People are constantly looking for a change, trying to find the next new thing. Many are under the assumption that this next thing is what will make them happy and content. So they move from job to job, from house to house, and from city to city in search of contentment.

Christians are not immune to this trend, as the ever-growing numbers of churches and ministries reveal. Some individuals, of course, are legitimately called by God to go out and start new works in new places. Others, however, just keep moving around because, in reality, they are driven by discontentment. They have grown familiar and frustrated with all that is going in their lives, so they just get up and leave.

This booklet outlines my conviction that discontentment is the one of the greatest sins for Christians today. This sin creeps into the Church, and it is what causes believers to meddle with

change (Proverbs 24:21).

The problem, I believe, is that many people do not understand the call of God for their lives. What we need is to receive the call of God and grab hold of the substance of eternal life that is always fresh and new, every moment.

*Chapter One*

BEING LED BY THE  
LIGHT OF GOD

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy [Spirit] said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

“And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

“So they, being sent forth by the Holy [Spirit], departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus” (Acts 13:1-4).

Acts 13 shows how missionaries in the early Church were sent out. Barnabas and Saul didn’t just come up and say, “Pray for us. We have decided to go somewhere,”—though that is the style of many people today.

In these verses, we see that first, they ministered to the Lord. To find out God's will, men of God began by ministering to Him. They followed the model set forth in Leviticus 16 and Ezekiel 44, where the priests appeared before the Lord in linen and ministered to Him. Afterward, they changed their clothes and went out to minister to the people.

This is a very deep principle. The priests could not minister to the people with the same garments that they wore to minister to the Lord. This is because we minister to the Lord with *imputed* righteousness, but we minister to people with *imparted* righteousness. To God, we minister with the righteousness that has been "reckoned" or placed on our account. To people, we minister with the righteousness we have received from God.

### *Walking in Imparted Righteousness*

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the

light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7).

We walk in the light, as He is in the light, that we may have fellowship with one another. When we receive doctrine from the Word of God, the Holy Spirit connects us as individuals to cooperate in our hearts as one body, according to our capacities.

The righteousness of God that was imputed to you and me through the death of Christ made it possible for us to receive the righteousness imparted from the Word. Our study of the Word of God, our inspiration through the grace of God, and our love in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit brings in a beautiful communion and communication as we minister to others. We are working out (imparting) what God has already worked in (imputed).

Unfortunately, the Holy Spirit is not the One to send out most people nowadays. Individuals purpose to go to the mission field, but in many cases, their decision is not a result of fasting and ministering before the Lord. Instead of being called and sent by God, people pick and choose according to the need and their ability to meet that need.

As the pastor of a church with a worldwide vision, having trained scores of missionaries and having profited from prayer and fasting, I have learned something. Too often, people have forgotten how to get together to fast and to pray. They simply are not in that spiritual realm. Furthermore, as we have often taught, the need does not constitute the call. We are not to rely on natural thinking, which would lead us to the obvious conclusion. God's thoughts and ways are not ours. They are much higher—and He *will* accomplish His purpose (Isaiah 55:8-11).

What happens too often is that someone gets bored where he is and decides to move on. And, really, he takes off and then does very little in the next place. With a genuine call from God, however, I will not be tempted to move on until I have fulfilled God's call for me where I am. We have to first fulfill the call of God for where we are. Don't forget that He who called us will also do it! (See 1 Thessalonians 5:24.)

*Chapter Two*

CONTENTMENT BRINGS  
GREAT GAIN

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity” (Philippians 4:10).

“And, when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

“And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

“And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

“And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (Matthew 8:23-25).

As a pastor, it is so important to know that I have people co-laboring who are called to serve with this ministry in Baltimore. But too often,

people wrestle with discontentment. While they are involved in the ministry, they are not absolutely content. These people are always looking for the next place to go.

The meaning of the word “contentment” goes far beyond the imagination of our natural dictionary in the human soul of explanation. Jesus exhibited contentment when he was sleeping on the boat in the midst of the storm. Peter couldn’t handle it, and he shouted for Jesus to wake up. Jesus was content, while Peter was discontent.

We see this contrast again when Jesus was walking on the water, in Matthew 14. Peter said, “If it is you, Lord, bid me to come.” Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter walked out on the water in contentment. But then, the gust of wind came, a severe burst of a storm came raging, and Peter took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink.

Throughout my ministry, I have learned how to be content in the midst of persecution. It didn’t take much for Peter to become discontented. But having an attitude of contentment is so profitable to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.

“For we brought nothing into this world,

and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:6-7).

The original Greek text of this verse puts contentment into an even stronger context. It reads this way: "To have the power, the presence, the provision, and the peace of God is tremendous, divine gain."

We need to understand that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. One crucial lesson we can learn in this world is to be called and sent into an area, become established in grace, and, as a result, give everything we have to glorify God in everything that we do.

### *Godliness in Action*

I think of our church orchestra. I am so thankful to each member from the bottom of my heart. What would I do without them? So many new people come into our services and they are immediately affected by the way they are taken care of and the love they perceive in the Body of Christ. Some of these folks are very selective in the churches that they visit, and they notice the things that make us different. So when they hear our musicians play in a professional *and* spiritual manner, it makes all the difference. Those musicians reveal a contentment that brings great

gain.

One night recently my wife and I were talking and thanking God for the ushers. "Our ushers are so beautiful, aren't they? The part they play in the church is amazing" she said. "Do we really realize what our ushers mean to us?"

"Probably not," I answered.

Those statements really broke my heart. Our ushers have been such a blessing to me and to all of our people. I am so thankful that we haven't had to change them every month because of discontentment. Some people may not consider ushering as a very important job; however, I have had church members tell me that the conduct of the ushers during their first visits to our church made a big difference in their decision to keep coming. They stayed because they liked the way they were treated by the ushers.

Others have been impressed by the precious attitude of our security staff. Many have remarked on the professionalism of the nursery staff, the quality of our printed material, the organization of our youth ministry and the Christian education department. The list could go on.

If you are doing one of these types of jobs, let me ask you this: "Are you content?" Your contentment makes a difference in people's

lives. It brings great gain.

### *Chapter Three*

## FIND VICTORY IN A VISION

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:5-6).

“My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change” (Proverbs 24:21).

Discontentment opens the way for people to meddle with change. This one decides suddenly that it is time to go live with Aunt Josephine. In the will of God, it may, in fact, be the time to go help Aunt Josephine. But outside the will of God, it is discontentment.

Discontentment causes anxiety and frustration. It is one of the culprits that hinder and hurt an individual Christian's life. Discontentment is

the problem behind most divorces. Some people find trouble in their marriage, and the first thing they want to do is take off. What is that? Discontentment.

What is behind most church splits? Discontentment. A group doesn't like the way things are done, so they go off and start their own ministry.

Discontentment always leads to familiarity in listening and to incapacity for appropriating the Word of God.

### *The Best Defense*

The most effective defense against discontentment is to have a vision. When a man of God oversees a ministry, he needs to have a vision, and he needs to communicate that vision to his people. He must make it clear to everyone that they are going to play major roles in the vision. The godliness of their lives will make them successful in these roles. They have contentment because of godliness, and their work brings great gain. They have all grace in all times for all things. Grace is exactly what they need in every emergency for all the work that they do.

Unity is another thing that prevents discontentment. Unity in prayer (Acts 2:1), in purpose,

in praise, and in service (Acts 5:12) brings contentment with great gain. It reveals unity in the presence of God and recognition of God's servants and what they do.

### *Going Out in Faith Rest*

Now, certainly, some dear people are going to be called to the mission field—both in the United States and to foreign lands. As a ministry, we cannot be discontent when God really does issue a call on someone's life. This will happen because of our worldwide vision from Jesus Christ, and we can do nothing to get in the way of God's call.

Those who are called, however, will be those who have learned to be content with what they have where they are now. They are people who live in faith rest. They are learning the lessons that must be learned in the situations and in the places where they are. These people recognize the provision God has for them, and they love the people with whom they serve. They have contentment. It only makes sense that these are the people God wants to use.

One of the most difficult things we face is discontentment. God will guide us when it is time to do something. He will show us what to

do, and no one can judge us when He moves us.

Still, the Holy Spirit has been communicating to me, speaking to my heart and saying this:

“My son, I want you to be content. No matter what happens to you or to your church, I want to start with you being content. That is your test of Me in you.”

## CONCLUSION

I cannot begin to tell you how our church has profited from the faithfulness of contented servants. It makes me weep just to think about it. Their contentment has made it possible for me to minister effectively. Their contentment with God has made all the difference.

The musicians in our orchestra don't show up a half-hour late. No, they come early, stay late, and work their hearts out. They reveal great contentment in giving their time. They give until it hurts. So many others do the same in soul winning and in all the various outreaches we have.

I could go on and on about it. I just want to say this to all of those who serve with me: Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for not letting discontentment hinder the work of God in our midst.