

Digging Ditches by Faith

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 6

THE NEED TO BE SPIRIT-TAUGHT

Chapter 2 12

OPERATING IN THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST

Chapter 3 16

DISCIPLINE THAT CREATES CAPACITY

Chapter 4 21

FAITH'S TRIUMPH OVER FEELINGS

CONCLUSION 25

INTRODUCTION

Everything about the world is often aimed at stimulating our senses and our intellect without God. On one hand, there is a what-you-see-is-what-you-get mentality. On another hand, we are told to “follow your heart,” and let your feelings be your guide. But God asks us to walk by faith, without benefit of sight or feelings.

Walking by faith may require that we do something just because God tells us to do it. The Lord has given us emotions and insight so we can appreciate and respond to Him. Still, there are times that He ordains when we feel nothing and see nothing in our relationship with God.

It is during these times that we must practice what we have heard, what we know is truth, and begin to dig ditches by faith. As this booklet will reveal, when we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us inwardly, we develop a capacity that clears the way for Him to bring us great victories outwardly.

Chapter One

THE NEED TO BE SPIRIT-TAUGHT

“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

“But the *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

“But he that is *spiritual* judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto *carnal*, even as unto babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:13-16; 3:1).

There are three kinds of men who dwell on this earth. The “natural man” referred to in this passage is *psuchikos* in the Greek. He is not re-

generated or renewed by the Holy Spirit. Rather, his soul houses the *kosmos*, which is Satan's world system on earth (Ephesians 2:2); therefore, because his spirit has not been quickened, his soul dominates his existence and he is "soulish."

"He that is spiritual" (*pneumatikos* in the Greek) speaks of one whose soul houses the Spirit of God (John 16:12-15). Filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit, this person can receive the mind of Christ, and his life reveals the fruit of the Spirit. Experiencing his position as seated in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6), his relationship with God is alive and personal, unhindered by circumstances or atmospheric projections.

First Corinthians 3:1, however, speaks of the "carnal" man (*sarkikos* in the Greek). This man has been regenerated, but because he has not allowed the Word of God to take root in his life, he walks in the flesh like the natural man (Romans 8:3-6). Without a life of faith, he produces only dead works that pertain to the flesh and worldly things.

Be Careful How You Hear

Though they are unaware of it, many people have a soul-power relationship with the Word of

God. As long as their emotions are being stirred and they sense God's presence, they can receive the message. But when they are preoccupied with self through the soul, they lack the capacity to receive the diversity of God's modes of expression. If, for example, God uses a teaching anointing and the pastor accurately reflects God's mood for that message, it may not be a "soul-stirring" message but a very precise, low-keyed, point-by-point presentation. Unfortunately, the hearer who lacks spiritual discernment will also lack appreciation for the message God ordained for his life at that time.

Whenever we study or listen to a message from the Word of God, it is crucial that we do not listen with our natural, soulish capacity. Each of us has a unique emotional and physical makeup, and all of us have faced a variety of experiences in past and current situations. Therefore, if we listen with our human understanding, we can come up with many different interpretations and wrong conclusions.

Unless we are tuned in to the Holy Spirit, the situations we face in life and the pressures we are under will color our perception of what we hear. The soul is a vital, integral part of every man, containing the conscience, self-conscious-

ness, emotions, volition, and mind. Still, the natural capacity of the soul can never instruct us in the things of God. The things of God are only revealed by the Spirit of God.

Rising Above It All

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11).

It is vital for the spiritual man to operate with his human spirit leading his soul, and not the other way around. It is unusual, though, for a person to be able to rightly divide the difference between the two processes. Even a preacher can preach through his soul, and there may be nothing noticeably wrong with his message, yet it lacks something. The key is in the fruit of the message and the impact it has in the Kingdom of God.

For example, the soul naturally carries feelings from previous experiences into the present capacity of today. So if you have gone without sleep, your soul cannot be quickened and you will experience legitimate tiredness. If, however, you are hearing the Word in your human spirit,

the quickening process of Romans 8:11 takes place. The Spirit that raised Jesus Christ from the dead will quicken you. There will be an impact on your soul, and your body will respond to that process.

Many people get a vision for their life, but they do not allow the vision to invade their human spirit. When God doesn't come through as they think He should, the vision is transferred to their soul where they try to fulfill the vision in the flesh. That is why a carnal person can hear a message, love it, and respect it. But if the soul-ish nature of the carnal man does not receive something from God that has to do with his vision, and if the vision does not come to pass, he becomes discouraged and disheartened.

There are precious times when the Holy Spirit breaks a preacher and causes him to weep while he speaks; however, if those are the only times you are blessed by a message, then you are living in carnality. There is no record of Jesus weeping His way through the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) or when He addressed the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-39). Of course there were occasions when He wept and broke down in tears—but not during *those* messages.

So we see that the soul does not possess the

faith of Jesus Christ. It is self-conscious, and self-consciousness neither offers nor produces faith in God. The soul offers only human faith in self-consciousness through self-awareness. What we need is to have the Holy Spirit quicken us—body, soul, and spirit—so we may be God-conscious through the faith of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Two

OPERATING IN THE FAITH
OF JESUS CHRIST

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

“For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:16-20).

The Limits of Our Own Faith

As we have seen, the soul is able to produce in us a faith in our human ability. Human faith has great power. Scores of unsaved businessmen and entrepreneurs have become multimillionaires through tremendous human faith in their abilities. There is just one problem: Their faith is limited to self-consciousness through self-awareness and the capacity and ability of the human soul.

Because of the limitation of human faith, people who do not possess a great natural capacity and ability cannot overcome the obstacles to personal success. So many alcoholics and drug addicts cannot leave their addictions. Their bodies and their souls have become very needy. Occasionally, they may allow someone to help them, but the help they accept is based upon very temporary reasons to fulfill the immediate need in their souls.

This limitation is also a reason why some pastors are defeated in almost everything they do for God. They try with all their hearts to do something for the Lord, but things never seem to work out. Why? The self-consciousness of human faith in the natural ability of their hu-

manity falls short. They use the natural to try to generate supernatural results, and that is an impossible task.

The Cutting Edge

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

The Word of God divides the soul from the spirit. My human soul needs to be separated from my human spirit through meditating on and reflecting the truth. I must not attempt to do anything through my soul. When I receive the Word of God in my spirit, I may not feel any different than when I was just receiving the Word into my soul; however, I am very conscious of God in my human spirit, and I am also very conscious of faith. God is everything that He says He is, and He doesn't need my emotions to help Him out!

Released into Faith Rest

When I am being Spirit-taught, I do not require hearing from a certain personality or re-

ceiving special treatment in order to be blessed. The Holy Spirit blesses me and teaches me. God is involved with my capacity, and I derive faith from the Word that I hear. I am conscious of having the faith of Jesus Christ. That faith is produced by the Word that I hear, not by the self-consciousness of my soul.

Some people work up their emotions in the soul, and in their human capacities they produce extended prayer times. I thank God for every prayer that is prayed, but to be effective, the spirit, not the soul, must be involved.

When the human spirit is involved with our activities, our focus is to maintain our relationship with God. We don't try to work, or try to promote and produce a revival. Frankly, we just care about God and us. We just walk with Him—believing, trusting, praying, abiding, asking, and thanking Him. Whatever happens becomes a matter of supernatural faith that accepts God's sovereignty in the final analysis of any result.

Chapter Three

DISCIPLINE THAT CREATES CAPACITY

“But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

“And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

“And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

“And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not

that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

“But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

“And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches” (2 Kings 3:11-16)

The kingdoms of Israel, Edom, and Judah were joining forces to battle Moab. Jehoshaphat was alone in asking to hear from the prophet of God. Elisha was called and he gave the kings a word from God: “Make this valley full of ditches.” And this speaks of discipline.

The word “disciple” (*mathetes* in the Greek text) refers to someone who is constantly under discipline. One of the challenges that all of us face as Christians is in establishing personal discipline. It is very easy for us to become immobile and stagnant in a certain type of situation. When are not functioning in personal discipline, we cannot work our way out of it. Like Jehoshaphat and his men, we need to discipline ourselves through the blueprints of God and through the divine map of God’s instructions. Simply put, we need to hear from God and obey.

Victory Comes by Faith Obedience

“God wants you to start digging ditches,” Elisha said. “It’s going to be hard work, so start right away. The enemy outnumbers you by a very large margin, so make the valley *full* of ditches. This is what God has told me to tell you.”

Our ditches are not something we dig with a spade. They are the things God tells us to dig because of personal discipline in our spirit life. Our faithfulness to do this will always bring the victory.

“For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

“And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

“And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

“And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the coun-

try was filled with water” (2 Kings 3:17-20).

An Offering That Pleases God

After digging the ditches, the first thing the armies did was to present a “meat offering.” Then, the waters came and filled in all the ditches. The Book of Leviticus, in chapters 3-5, describes the various offerings that God required of His people: the sin offering, the peace offering, the meal offering, and the meat offering. The meat offering speaks to us of total dedication and commitment to Christ, presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). The offering was done early in the morning, representing the godly nature and attitude of God’s people in putting Him first.

The water came by the way of Edom (representing the flesh or the natural man). Something had to happen to the flesh. To walk with God, our flesh must be crucified with Christ. God takes our supernatural faith—enough to dig ditches—then, supernaturally, He brings the water of the Word through our humanity, baptizing us into His death, burial, and resurrection. But the water could not come in until the ditches were dug and the offerings presented.

It takes real humility to dig ditches. It takes

brokenness. If I desire success in my business, I have to dig ditches to deepen my capacity for success. I need to dig ditches so that I will not be insecure in my relationships with the people I love. If I want a healthy marriage, then I must dig ditches so that the water of the Word can come through the desert of my life, bringing refreshment and new life.

I must dig ditches so that I can properly relate to the Body of Christ. The water of the Word brought in by the Holy Spirit becomes a river of life to fill up my capacity, to fill up the ditches I have dug—because I heard from God and I chose to obey Him by faith.

Chapter Four

FAITH'S TRIUMPH OVER FEELINGS

“For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.”

“And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

“And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood:

“And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

“And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country.

“And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kir-haraseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it.

“And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

“Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land” (2 Kings 3:17, 21-27).

God told these kings that they would see no wind and no rain. In other words, the victory was not going to come through feelings of affirmation or sight. Our souls always want feelings and our souls always want something to see. But God would give Jehoshaphat and company neither. Only supernatural faith in the human spirit was going to work in this case.

The kings could have said, “Hey, it’s only natural. We want to see the rain come. We want

to see the wind blow. Then, we will know that all of our work is going to make something happen.”

But God said, “No, you won’t feel a thing. Furthermore, you won’t see a single drop of rain.” By sight, nothing seemed to happen. But by morning, the ditches were filled with water, more than enough for a tremendous victory.

Overcomers through the Blood

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

The Moabites arrived on the scene ready for war. The sunrise made water in the ditches appear as red as blood. Thinking the armies of Edom, Israel, and Judah had destroyed each other in a violent civil war, Moab’s soldiers charged into the valley, looking to gather the spoils. Instead, they ran straight into an ambush and were chased back to their own country. The soldiers of Israel, Edom, and Judah came at the Moabites from every side.

Moab, her army outnumbering her opponents by hundreds upon hundreds, got up that morning looking to claim territories; but she fin-

ished the day utterly destroyed as the armies on God's side destroyed her cities. Even the king of Moab became so desperate that he took his son and burnt him as an offering to the false gods of the Moabites (2 Kings 3:27).

The enemy retreated because the water that filled those ditches (which Israel dug by faith) looked like blood, because of the reflection of the morning sun. This is God's way to victory—through the water and the blood. All we have to do is back off and rest in Him. Then, our victories will come through the Word and the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10)

God wants us to dig ditches without regard to our feelings or our sight. He wants us to keep on digging as we develop a capacity for Him to work. This takes humility, but in His time He will lift us up.

I can remember so many times when there was nothing for us to do but dig ditches. There was nothing to see, nothing that made us feel like going on. It even began to look as though there was only one thing left to do: to quit.

But instead, we dug ditches.

God said, “How about digging some ditches?”

We said, “Lord, can we just see *something*—*anything*—to give us a hint of what you are doing?”

“No. Just keep on digging.”

During much of that time, there were no feelings and nothing to hold on to for support.

With discipline, because of obedience, we dug ditches. It turned out to be a beautiful lesson. By God's Word and through the Blood of Christ, the great victories come. Like Israel, once we obey, we need to back off—resting in God's provision while the enemy is set up for certain defeat.

And now, having seen the hand of God in action, we have the capacity for even more success in His plan and purpose for us. "...In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).