

Jewels of Reconciliation

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 © 2004

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

FAMILIARITY BRINGS WITHDRAWAL

Chapter 2 12

*FROM WASTING AND WANTING TO REPENTANCE
AND LIFE*

Chapter 3 16

THE GREATEST OF COMEBACKS

CONCLUSION 22

INTRODUCTION

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Reconciliation is a subject that is always on the heart of God. He never looks at people the way that you and I do. He sees as only He can see, and He is always waiting to be gracious to His people.

For the most part, the world's attitude toward those who fail is that they should be shunned and forgotten. Very few will commit themselves to reclaiming and rectifying damaged lives. According to the Bible, however, this is exactly the way God operates every moment of every day.

In this booklet, we examine the path taken by the prodigal son in Luke 15. We see his downward spiral into a wasteful existence. Happily, the story does not end there. These pages

will reveal how the Father's love remained steady and ready to receive the son back to the family and to fellowship.

Chapter One

FAMILIARITY BRINGS
WITHDRAWAL

“And he said, A certain man had two sons:

“And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

“And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

“And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

“And when he came to himself, he said,

How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

"And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

"But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:11-24).

In the story of the Prodigal Son, we find an expression of the jewels of reconciliation in the Bible. It is a unique story—probably one of the most recognized stories in the Book.

First, the younger son asked for his inheritance, and his father gave it to him. God will sometimes give us what we want, even if it is not the best thing. So many people have received things and, in a temporal evaluation, have called them blessings of God. When God answered their prayers, however, He answered them in accord with their own self-will. According to Psalm 106:15, He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.

Recently, there have been certain attacks upon the Body of Christ. Without going into specifics, these attacks have had a specific purpose, which is to make people walk by sight. Satan wants people in the church to depend upon their experiences—and, oh, how he has a field day when people walk that way.

Jesus did not reprove by what He saw (Isaiah 11:3), and He did not judge by what He heard. He refused to walk by sight in His humanity on earth. He refused to base His evaluations on hearsay. His instruction to the apostles was this, in John 7:24: “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

Self-Will Triggers a Reaction

The first mistake the prodigal son made was

that he lived in his own self-will. Oh, may God help us to say as Jesus did, "Not my will, but thine be done" (Matthew 26:39). Next, he gathered up all of his belongings and took off on a journey into a far country. There, he wasted his substance with riotous living.

He progressed from self-will to selfishness. First, he said, "I am going to get my own way." Then he said, "I am going to experience life apart from my father, apart from the boredom I experience at home."

It is amazing how easily people withdraw. They are bored with God, bored with Jesus Christ, bored with the Holy Spirit, bored with their Creator, bored with the Redeemer. They go from self-will and they progress into selfishness. That is why we always need to catch boredom whenever it crops up into our lives. We must also catch familiarity and bring it into captivity to Christ.

Anytime you are dissatisfied with your life or with people, it is because you have not been crucified with Christ for the moment you are in.

Each of us must take up our Cross each day. In doing this, we will love the fellowship we have with God, the fellowship we have in serving Him with others, and the fellowship of obe-

dience to Him. We will love to fellowship with God once we treasure His presence, magnify His Person, amplify His promises, and live in divine experiences.

Chapter Two

FROM WASTING AND WANTING TO REPENTANCE AND LIFE

The Prodigal separated himself unto what he wanted, and then he began wasting what he had. He went from separation from God, separation from his father, and separation of service in order to serve his desires. He descended into a deep-rooted life of sensuality and squandered all that he had until he found himself spiritually and materially destitute.

We will always spend all that we have when start down the path of self-will and selfishness. Spiritual destitution is our destination when we enter into the pattern of sensuality and we are separated from God in our experience.

The important point, however, is that in the midst of his self-abasement, the prodigal son was humbled by God. This story is a testimony of how God humbles us when we refuse to humble ourselves. This man was far from home

and deep in want. He could not have what he wanted because he had spent all that he had. The process of wasting brought him to self-abasement.

God let the prodigal reap exactly what he had sown. Notice Luke 15:16:

“And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.”

This son had no idea what he had lost. He was longing for the slop that was fed to the pigs.

But beyond that, this son had no idea that he had a father at home who was looking out from his front porch, always wondering if this would be the day that his long lost son would come home. The prodigal had no comprehension of his father's heart. He never understood proper motives and how they related to his father's heart. He never understood the privilege of serving God. Familiarity, boredom, lust of the flesh, and the pride of life consumed him. What did that lead him to? Starvation.

Realization and Conviction

“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with

hunger!

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

“And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15:16-17).

A beautiful thing happened here. The son “came to himself.” This is called a realization. When God’s people come to themselves and get right with God, they stop their backsliding, because they have experienced a realization. It is the most precious thing to realize that God has a provision for every single problem we will ever have.

I have said this to so many people recently. For every situation, God will provide a divine solution. When this divine solution comes to us through the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit and we mix faith with what we hear, then we will experience a realization of the solution.

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

“And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15:18-19).

First came the realization, and then came resolution through humility by choosing to return to his father. Sin had exacted its price in his life, and now he had a realization and a resolution. "I will go home and just confess to my father and admit that I have sinned against heaven."

This is repentance. Oh, the gift of repentance is something very beautiful. The prodigal son had to repent for something big, but as believers we should go beyond this and also repent for the little things that have crept into our lives.

"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

"Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth" (Jeremiah 31:18-19).

Chapter Three

THE GREATEST OF COMEBACKS

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

“But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

“And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:20-24).

We have seen the Prodigal experience realization, resolution, and repentance. Now we will see his return and his reconciliation. He came back to the place that he left; he came back to the

place that he had misunderstood. There, he had a great reconciliation with his father.

The father then called for the robe, the ring, and the shoes. The once-lost son is getting re-clothed.

God re-clothes us when we come to the point of reconciliation. For our outward appearance, we receive the robe of righteousness. Our restoration becomes very evident. Even though we are saved, if we have wandered away in sin but have returned to God, we all need to experience the re-clothing of the inner man and the outer man. God clothes us again with the Finished Work.

At last, after all of this, there is rejoicing—wonderful rejoicing in celebration of the son's return.

Rejoice Over Those Who Return

At every service, someone gets saved in our church. I always get a feeling of rejoicing when someone is saved. I cannot explain it. I cannot grasp it. I cannot understand it. Yet, there is joy, just as there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner who is converted. The angels rejoice, and I believe with all my heart that loved ones already in heaven rejoice as well when they

look through the crystal sea and view what is happening on earth.

Believers ought to be happy to see people get saved. No one in a church service should grow bored and feel as if they have to get up and leave during the invitation for salvation at the end of the service. How can anyone be bored when souls are being transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son? A true believer should recognize this as one of the most important rewards he ever receives in his service to God.

Just as there should be great rejoicing in the hearts of Christians when an unbeliever receives Christ, we should rejoice when a Christian returns to Him and is reconciled.

The Glorious Ring

"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).

When the Prodigal came back home, He received a ring. In that ring were eight jewels, the jewels of reconciliation, as I like to call them, referred to in Romans chapter five.

First, there is justification and that brings in peace. Next, we are given access by faith. Right now, at this moment, we have the jewel of access by faith into the grace wherein we stand. This access comes with an authority, and it guarantees an eternal circle of access to God the Father that has been given to us by Jesus Christ.

What an amazing thing this is! With this level of access, we can come boldly before God's throne.

Other jewels in the ring of reconciliation include joy and hope. Then we have patience and experience, two jewels that really go together, as patience works experience into our lives.

How vital it is to experience the love of God, the grace of God, the convictions of God, the way of God, the truth of God. We can experience the life of God in the plan of God, in the purpose

of God, in the poise of God, through the provision of God!

Next, we have hope. What a beautiful thing it is not to be alienated from the life of God through unbelief, but instead to enjoy the tremendous blessed hope that is in knowing and trusting God. Our hope is not only in Jesus Christ's second coming, but our hope is also in having His blessings in our lives right now.

Then, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

I cannot explain to you what I believe God is going to do for us. Great things are planned for God's children because of the jewels in His ring of reconciliation of Romans 5. Justification, peace, access, joy, patience, experience, hope, and love are available to us all the time.

"But I tried and I failed," you say.

The answer for you is Daniel 3:17: He is able to deliver you. Romans 4:21 says that He will fulfill His promises. In 2 Timothy 1:12, God guards what is committed to Him. He saves us to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25). And, according to Jude 24, God is able to keep us from falling.

Still, when we do fail, we have to get up and keep going on with Him.

God wants to bring us the sweet blessing of

reconciliation. He wants us to experience His sweet presence and do His mighty works. Praise Him. Let us stand before Him and realize just how wonderful it is to live in the blessings of reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

Have you ever considered some of the last words of people in the Bible?

For example, among Jesus Christ's last words before He ascended to heaven were these: "Ye shall receive power." He promised us power to resist the devil and power to bless others. This promise includes the power of God over sin, over fear, and over failure.

The last words of Second Peter are these: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). John's last words in Revelation are these: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:21).

These are beautiful principles from the Word of God, and they point to God's great principle of reconciliation. Instead of isolating ourselves from the Body and hiding out because of fear and shame brought on by our failure, let us

allow those jewels of reconciliation to shine forth. We have been redeemed, and all the glory goes to God.