

Coming Home

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

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

THE CURSE IS CONQUERED

Chapter 2 11

OUR DECLARATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Chapter 3 15

REIGNING BY THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

CONCLUSION 21

INTRODUCTION

Coming home is an event often filled with emotions. Many people who have served in the military know the thrill of finally coming home after a war. There is a feeling of freedom and relief if there were no serious wounds or injuries. As my older brothers came back after World War II, my mother would just weep with thanksgiving, so grateful to have them at home again. They all saw action and were wounded, yet they all came home.

It is such a thrill when someone who was very close to death comes home from the hospital. This happened when a dear friend was expected to go to heaven to be with Jesus; but after a time, he was pronounced well and sent home. He was very happy about coming home, and so were his loved ones.

The Word of God describes many cases of people coming home. The prodigal son, in Luke 15, came to the end of himself and said, "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).

While he was still afar off, the father saw the son coming home. He ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed his neck again and again (Luke 15:20). The son said, "I am no longer worthy to be your son." The father's answer? "Bring my son the best robe. Put a ring on his finger. Bring him shoes for his feet, and kill the fatted calf." The father did all of this because his son had come home.

As this booklet will reveal, the father did not care what his son had done; he just wanted his son back home. The fact that he had gone to a far country and wasted his inheritance was not an issue. The father just wanted him home. What mattered is that the son came home. Any believer who has failed can come home at any time, because God's righteousness is ours forever.

Chapter One

THE CURSE IS CONQUERED

“LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:

“How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;

“Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

“I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,

“Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob” (Psalm 132:1-5).

David made a unique statement in this Psalm. What did he mean? Think about it: God was not at home with David. David was definitely God’s child, but David did not have God at home in him.

Many Christians are saved, they have been born again, and yet they know nothing about the habitation of God. Yes, God is in them. He

inhabits their hearts. But a “habitation,” spoken of in Psalm 132:5, means something different. The Hebrew word refers to an inner dwelling place.

It is vital that we understand this: All of us have sinned (Romans 3:23); and because of sin, God has allowed the curse of spiritual death to come upon God’s people (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23). When we give a place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27), we deny God an inner dwelling place.

The Blood of His Promise

Then came Jesus Christ, the God-Man. He went to the Cross on Calvary, shed His precious blood, and died. He was buried, but then He rose again and ascended to heaven—and He will come back again. Based on God’s promises to Abraham, Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law of sin and death. Now, through faith in those promises, we receive the Holy Spirit, according to Galatians 3:13-14:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we

might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Jesus Christ took away Satan’s legal right to judge us, to accuse us, to say anything about our sin. Jesus took away Satan’s legal right; therefore, there is no more power or fear in death for the Christian. The believer who dies goes home instantly to be with God. Before he can blink an eye, his soul arrives in heaven.

Satan has lost all of his legal rights to administer the curse of death. The fact is that Satan doesn’t have a single right to our lives in any situation—even in our worst state, even in the worst messes we have made.

The Source of Shame

The first time Adam and Eve were aware of being naked was recorded in Genesis 3:7. Prior to this time in the garden of Eden, they wore no clothes, but they were not ashamed. The awareness of their nakedness indicated that shame and guilt had entered their consciousness. The inner man of the soul brought forth false concepts about nakedness. Adam and Eve knew that Someone saw their sin. They were naked, and they knew that God saw that they were guilty.

There, Satan began to administer and execute the curse of spiritual death, defiling their souls. Guilt, shame, fear, insecurity, inadequacy—all of these things came in through Satan's administration.

Chapter Two

OUR DECLARATION
OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

“To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:21-26).

In Nehemiah 1:9, God is saying, “Turn to Me

and come home, backsliders!” Even the worst backslider in the world still has been declared righteous—once, and for all time. On the Cross, Jesus purchased our redemption with His blood. Because of that, Satan is not allowed to bring up anyone’s sin.

Does that mean we have a license to sin? Absolutely not. God forbid that anyone backslide. *God forbid!* Just as children are disciplined by their earthly fathers, backsliders will be disciplined by their Heavenly Father. A backslider can never be happy in his sin, yet God has declared him righteous—and nothing can change that (Romans 8:33-39).

As Christ is in heaven, so are we in the world (1 John 4:17). Christ is righteous; therefore, anyone who receives Him is righteous forever.

The Representative Man

When David went up against Goliath, the rules for the challenge were clearly established. The nation that won the battle would rule the other nation. Both sides had a representative man. If David won, every Israelite would go free. If Goliath won, the Philistines would reign over Israel and make it a nation of slaves.

David took five smooth stones—five, the number that stands for grace—before he headed into battle with his sling. He only used one stone to slay Goliath, and that stone represents Jesus Christ the Chief Cornerstone. David relied on the Chief Cornerstone, and that one smooth stone went right into Goliath's head.

David ran boldly at the giant, saying, "The battle is the LORD's" (1 Samuel 17:47). Then, he went over, jumped on Goliath, and cut off the giant's head. I am sure that when the Israelites saw that, every one of them cried, "We are free!" Israel's representative had won. The Philistines, meanwhile, ran in fear because their man lost, and they knew their whole nation had lost.

Just as Israel was in David when he fought Goliath, we were in Christ when He died and was buried and was resurrected by the Holy Spirit and the Father (Romans 1:4). I was in Christ, you were in Christ. When He won, *we* won. *We won!* We are saved, we are resurrected, and He has declared us righteous. God gave us His righteousness, through His forbearance (Romans 3:25). He won, we won, and now Satan has no legal right to our lives.

To Live Is Christ

We know that God will discipline through His love, and He will let believers reap what they sow. But, God will never let Satan say a word against a backslider. He won't let anyone say anything about a backslider. We can go alone to a backslider to restore him, but we go because of love, according to the table of organization (Matthew 18:15; Galatians 6:1).

If we must go to someone, we go in meekness, considering ourselves. Why? Because every born-again believer has been declared to be righteous. There is no question as to whether or not he is righteous. God has declared him to be righteous. That is it. We go to the backslider in an attitude of love to restore him so that he can live according to his righteous standing.

Our state, which is righteousness, is our standing. Our position is our eternal condition. Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4), and for us to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21). The moment He declared us to be righteous, we became just as righteous as God is, right now on earth. Even with our old sin nature. God Almighty has declared that we are righteous—just as righteous as He is (Romans 5; Philippians 3:9).

Chapter Three

REIGNING BY THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

“In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:6).

“In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness” (Jeremiah 33:16).

“Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

“And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

“That no flesh should glory in his presence.

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

“That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:25-31).

In Christ, we have His wisdom, His righteousness, and His sanctification, freely. We have been justified freely by grace through faith in His blood. He has declared us to be righteous.

We can be more spiritual, but we cannot be more righteous because we have Christ’s righteousness. It was given to us as a gift. We received the abundance of grace and the gift of His righteousness. Now we reign in life by One, Jesus Christ (see Romans 5:17).

How do we reign? Simply by receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. Consider that! We reign by receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. That is how we reign!

We do not reign by works, by striving or try-

ing, or by human good. We reign through the abundance of grace and the gift of His righteousness.

The righteousness of God is from faith to faith (Romans 1:17). The just shall live by faith. Roman 10:6 speaks of faith righteousness and Romans 10:8 refers to the Word of faith. We grow in experiencing our righteousness by receiving and applying the Word of God by faith.

In Psalm 132, when David referred to a “habitation,” he was saying to God, “I want to make a home for Your righteousness in me.” We must understand that God’s righteousness lives in our bodies. We are not righteous because of the way we act, but because of what God gave us and because of what we have received on the basis of grace. We received the abundance of grace. We received the gift of righteousness. We received redemption through faith in His blood. At that moment, God said, “I declare *you* righteous—now and forever.”

Clothed By God

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD re-

buke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

“And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zechariah 3:1-4).

The devil came up with the whole list of Joshua’s sins. But Jesus stood up and said, “Don’t open your mouth. Be quiet and get out of here.” Joshua may have been a backslidden man, but he had received perfect righteousness that was given by God.

This is the point: We can always come home to Jesus. Every believer has a home where he is totally accepted. We are personally righteous because of Christ’s righteousness. Even those we minister to who aren’t making the progress we think they should be making are righteous, too.

Yes, we need to grow. No one *wants* to be out of fellowship with God. I can’t think of anyone who wants to be disciplined, even if we are disciplined in love. But the bottom line is this: We

are righteous, and the devil has no rights to accuse, or to judge, or to utter a single word against one of God's righteous ones.

Satan Has No Rights

Satan's legal rights have been terminated. He can no longer administer the curse to a believer. He can no longer bring in the fear of death—we won't even taste death because Jesus tasted death for us (Hebrews 2:9; John 8:51). We will never die spiritually in our souls (John 11:25-26). Therefore, Satan's days are totally over. We can stand up boldly with integrity, without pride and without dishonesty and say, "Devil, you are looking at a righteous man. Take a good look—I am righteous."

Every Christian can say that with integrity through grace and through mercy, because our righteousness is of God. For this reason, whenever anyone goes around judging others according to the law, his righteousness is as filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). We cannot compare or measure the righteousness of others. We do not measure ourselves by ourselves or compare ourselves with ourselves. We are what we are by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10). Because God is righteous, you and I are righteous. I cannot mea-

sure my righteousness against your righteousness because both of us have perfect righteousness forever. We each wear the robe of God's righteousness. We are sealed by the Spirit. We are His.

CONCLUSION

As Christians, we learn to settle differences by letting God be at home in us, letting His righteousness have its inner dwelling in us. When there is an issue to discuss, we can start by understanding that we both have the righteousness of God. We are just two righteous people who are about to discuss something through grace. That approach alone could solve so many problems.

The prophet Elijah was just a man, yet he prayed and the rain stopped for three and a half years. Then, he prayed and the rains came back. He was just as we are—righteous. God found a home in him, and Elijah was living through God (Galatians 2:20).

After His resurrection, Jesus said to Mary, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father” (John 20:17). Imagine the Father saying, “You have come home! Oh, I have missed You.” Jesus Christ came home as a Man, glorified. And

because of God's righteousness in us, He will welcome each of us home that way.

In Acts 7:55, Stephen was being stoned, and Jesus stood up to welcome him home to heaven. I can hear Jesus saying, "There is Stephen, my servant. He has been persecuted and has suffered so much pain. But he let My righteousness have a home in him, and now he is coming home with Me."

In Luke 15, as a father ran to meet his son, he said, "There he is—my son! He's limping, he's barefooted, but he is coming home to me." Just as the prodigal was welcomed home, the Father gladly welcomes us home if we have strayed away.

If you have been born again, you are perfectly righteous. More than just forgiven sinners, we are righteous saints. The righteousness He gave to us as a gift can now have its home in us. We can abide in His righteousness every day. It is ours forever.

The righteousness of God has a home in us. In our marriages, in our churches, in our schools, we desire to reveal the complete righteousness of God in every situation on earth. As David prayed, so we need to pray that we might be a habitation for God.