

*From Conviction
to Conversion*

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

FOLLOW-SHIP: ONLY A BEGINNING

Chapter 2 14

MAKING RIGHT TURNS

Chapter 3 17

THE MARKS OF CONVERSION

CONCLUSION 21

INTRODUCTION

One morning, as I greeted my wife, I thought of something precious to me. I thought of how it was on January 5, many years ago, when she asked me if we would get married, and I said, "I'll pray about it and do my best to give you an answer."

I prayed that whole year, and on February 27 of the next year, I said, "I'd like to meet with you."

She said, "You mean you finally made up your mind?"

I said, "Yes. I will accept your invitation."

That was a wonderful day, and we were just thrilled.

Then up in Vermont, as we sat outdoors at some old antique restaurant, I took out my guitar (she didn't know I had it on the back seat), and I sang to her "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You?"

As I sang with, obviously, a very good voice,

tears came down from her eyes.

I said, "How could anyone shed tears at this kind of a voice?"

She said, "If you had waited as long as I have, you'd cry too."

I had to make a decision, and I made a great decision.

Decisions are so important to our lives.

The first great decision we have to make is to receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. That choice, which we make with our free will, means that we will spend eternity in heaven with Him. After that, however, God desires that we continue to make good decisions in response to His initiations to us.

As this booklet will explain, many people follow after Christ to a certain point, and then they stop. Only a remnant of believers choose to be converted by the power of the Holy Spirit as He works through the truth of the Word of God. We pray that this booklet will inspire others to receive the convictions of the Lord and allow themselves to be converted to follow Jesus every day in His new and living way.

Chapter One

**FOLLOW-SHIP:
ONLY A BEGINNING**

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:19-20).

A pastor has a lot of things to do, a lot of details to tend to. It is his calling. But the primary thing that a pastor needs to do is to do a good job of preaching the message of salvation. Why? Because there are two kinds of people in this world: those who are saved and those that are lost. That’s it. Either a person is saved or he is lost.

This is what the Word of God says:

“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through

Him might be saved.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:17-18).

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

These two classes of people are everywhere you go, and you will meet them with every move you make. There are those who are condemned forever, who will go to a literal hell, and those who are saved forever, who will go to heaven because they received Jesus Christ as their Savior, by grace through faith.

A decision has to be made as to where they will spend eternity.

Once we make a decision to be saved, we have to make another decision and answer this question: Are we going to follow the Lord?

I call that decision “follow-ship.”

Our Days are Numbered

“And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

"But hast lifted up thyself against the LORD of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

"Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.

"And this is the writing that was written, *MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN*. "This is the interpretation of the thing: *MENE*; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

"*TEKEL*; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

"*PERES*; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

"Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

"And Darius the Median took the kingdom,

being about threescore and two years old" (Daniel 5:22-31).

Belshazzar and his drunken crowd were having a party, and in the process, they used the utensils from God's temple. In the midst of it came the finger of God to write on the wall, "*MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN.*" "Numbered, Belshazzar! Your days are numbered." That is what the inscription was telling him. "Your life has been weighed, and you have been found wanting." In other words, "Judgment is going to come upon you because you are lost."

I cannot imagine what it means to walk down the streets of any community or any city and not realize that some of those around me are condemned and lost. I repeat: There are only two classes of people in this world. There are the saved and there are the lost.

Most families include people from both of these classes. There are people you love with all your heart, but they are lost. If they were to die today, they would go on forever and ever in a Christless eternity.

Choose Christ Today

So if you are reading this and you have never made a decision to receive Jesus Christ as

your Savior, may I plead with you to get saved? Do you realize that Jesus paid it all, that He shed His own blood for our sins? Do you realize that upon His own body, He took the penalty for every single sin anyone in the world ever committed (Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24)? Do you realize that He took all the guilt and shame from us so that we could be free?

I know so many people who are just so thankful that they are saved. They go to bed every night knowing they have the gift of eternal life (John 10:28). They have been sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14; 4:30), the gift of God given at salvation when they were regenerated and justified by grace through faith, having peace with God (Romans 5:1).

I plead with you today, don't take this gift of salvation for granted. Accept Him today as your Savior and have the assurance that the Word of God says, "That you may know you have eternal life" (1 John 5:12-13). If you have never done so, you can pray right now, as you are reading this. Just say, *"Dear Jesus, thank You for loving me so much that you died on the Cross and shed Your blood for my sins. I receive You as my personal Savior. Thank You for Your Word, and teach me to know You more each day. In Your name, I pray this.*

Amen."

A Know-So Salvation

My salvation isn't "hope so." It isn't something that is "maybe so." My salvation is totally "know so." I *know* that it is so. I also know that it is eternally so, because my Bible tells me that that Jesus Christ will never, no never leave me or forsake me (see Hebrews 13:5). "These things are written unto you, that you may know you have eternal life." It is so crucial to know it.

A lot of people think they got saved when they were baptized as a child. No, they did not. Others think they are saved because they went to church as children and were brought up in good homes. They were not saved because of that. Some of you perhaps believe that you were saved because you became religious. No, you were not saved because you became religious.

The only way any one of us can be saved is to receive the gift of repentance and by faith accept Christ as our Savior. One day we came to God the Father and said, "I believe that Your Son died, was buried, and rose again from the dead." The moment we believed in our hearts and confessed with our mouths, we were saved.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth

the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Chapter Two
MAKING RIGHT TURNS

“Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

“And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s,

“But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life.

“But many that are first shall be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:28-31).

There is a group of people we can easily recognize in the Scriptures. They were people who lived in follow-ship. In Mark 10, Peter said to Jesus, “We have left all to follow thee.” Andrew brought Peter to the Messiah, and Peter believed and he was saved. Now he was willing to do

something else. In John 1:40-42, Peter got saved and began to follow Jesus.

Dear friends, please consider this carefully. Peter was willing to give up all that he had to follow Jesus. How noble. How virtuous. How right. And he said, "We have given up everything." But if you will notice carefully, though Peter had left everything, and was saved, and followed Jesus Christ, he was not converted.

How many of you are converted? Oh, yes, you are saved, and you follow Jesus. But are you converted? That is the question. Many people live in follow-ship, but not conversion.

Glorify God in Your Body

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Conversion happens after a person believes. For example: I am walking down the road without God's direction, and then I have a dominating, convicting thought that I am a follower, but I have never truly been converted in my heart. Then I stop, and I think, "Oh, God wants my

body to be His. His Holy Spirit is inside of me.”

You stop, you think, and you turn right around and go the opposite way, following Christ all the way. Now you have been converted.

In John 6:66, because of His “hard” saying about the Cross, many of the disciples followed Him no more. They refused conversion. Many of these disciples had followed Christ, but when He said something that was hard to take, they went back and never followed Him again.

Some of you do not come to church on Sunday nights, and you don’t want to hear me say this, but you are not converted. It is in the Bible, but you don’t want me to say this. You may think I’m getting too close to home. But just read Hebrews 10:25.

Will you go to heaven? Yes, you will go to heaven if you are saved. Are you following Christ? Yes, you are following Christ. Have you been converted? No, you haven’t. You have withdrawn from following Christ with all your heart, in every area of life.

You have made some good decisions. First, a decision for salvation. Secondly, a decision to follow Jesus. But there also needs to be a decision for conversion.

Chapter Three

THE MARKS OF CONVERSION

Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

“But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31-32).

Here were the disciples, forsaking Him and fleeing from His presence (Matthew 26:56). And while Jesus was going through the pain of His crucifixion, the disciples stood afar off (Luke 23:49). Why? They had not been converted. Their capacity allowed them to follow all the way to the Cross. But except for John, no disciples were at the Cross.

All that would change. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descended, and Peter was converted.

You know, people bring up so many possible problems. “What if this happens?” “What if that happens?” Forget those things. God takes

care of each step. God takes care of the problems. If anything ever happened to a pastor, the people would miss him tremendously, but they would adjust to what they had been taught through conversion. They have already been converted in a hundred different ways, but they would be converted again in those areas of need.

Conversion—it's a beautiful thing.

You say, "I don't go soul winning." Then you need a conversion.

"I don't believe in praying that the sick will be healed."

Then you need a conversion so that the sick will be healed when you pray.

We need a conversion in our faith. We need a conversion in our prayer life. There is one salvation, but many conversions.

Moving Beyond Follow-ship

The disciples began to follow Jesus Christ, and they did follow Him. But after they were converted, the Word of God says, "They turned the world upside down." I like this!

Here was Simon whose name was "Impulsive," and Jesus said, "I'm going to change your name to Peter, which means "A Rock." And what happened? He left his old identity and

took on a new one. Simon was converted.

But you think, “Wait a minute. He followed Jesus.”

You see, that’s what *you* think. That is why I’m preaching this message. You think follow-ship means conversion. Follow-ship means you are saved. That’s all.

You were saved at decision number one. Follow-ship is decision number two. But many people who enter into follow-ship are not consistent after a period of time. They give up things that they have, but sooner or later time wears them down and they back off. Their lives become more family-oriented (as precious as that is) and socially-oriented. As far as they ever go is follow-ship.

But oh, give me somebody who comes to God and reads the Bible and prays and is filled with the Holy Spirit. He will make sure that he is in the geographical will of God. Followers of Christ will make sure they are in the geographical will of God—the place where God has called them. They make sure that they are sitting under the pastor-teacher God has for them, and they receive what that pastor is getting from God for their lives.

Then comes conversion. The words we used

to say we don't say anymore, because we have been converted into kindness and tenderheartedness. Our life is not our own. We have been bought with a price, and we know that we are His—completely.

CONCLUSION

I want you to look at it like this and leave you with this thought, if you are ready for it. Our church building used to be an old grocery store. It had different owners. The ownership changed and the use of the buildings changed. We turned it into a church.

When you get saved, the ownership changes. You become a new creature through Christ, He begins to own you. The ownership changes. The purpose and the use of the building changes. It is no longer used for the old purposes.

I saw a house, and this old house was empty, and it was worthless, and it looked ugly. Then, somebody bought it, fixed it up, and made it look nice. The ownership changed and the house was used for something wonderful, for some good people to live in it and who would keep up the house.

That is what conversion is. Your house changes. The ownership changes.

Please do not put this booklet down and ignore what I preached about the difference between follow-ship and conversion. You have read a message today from the Bible. We gave you Scriptures categorically. Having been convicted of the truth, let's let the Holy Spirit continue to lead us into life-changing conversions as we go forward in God's plan.