

Live in the Provision

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

GOD'S TRAINING PROCESS

Chapter 2 10

THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST MADE EVIDENT

Chapter 3 14

GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS

CONCLUSION 20

INTRODUCTION

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

This is one promise from the Bible that believers often overlook. Jesus did tell us that in this life, times of testing and trials would come. As Christians, we do not belong to this world’s system; therefore, it will battle against us.

Yet, God allows these things—the suffering, the trials, the times of persecution—to come into our lives to help us grow. It is vital that we take up His promise that declares that no temptation or test will destroy us (Isaiah 54:17; 1 Corinthians 10:13). The Lord provides a way of escape for every situation. When all is said and done, we will stand out as testimonies of God’s provision, declaring His power to the world system and to the angels at war in the air, all around us.

This booklet is written to reveal to each heart that Jesus Christ never allows us to be without His provision. In the midst of this evil, deceitful,

crooked world, He always has a way out for us,
no matter how tremendous the trial we face.

Chapter One

GOD'S TRAINING PROCESS

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

God is faithful, for He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear. With every temptation, He provides a way of escape. If we were to read all the Bible verses on the subject of temptation, and then ponder and meditate on those verses, we would come out with a tremendous resource for our hearts that would help us in times of trouble.

The Bible tells us that we will be tempted. Satan loves to tempt us. The devil tempts us to be discouraged, tempts us to think that we are not good enough, tempts us to feel condemned. But he is not allowed to tempt us beyond what

we are able to bear.

First Corinthians 10:13 is so comforting, because it says that the tests and trials we face are exactly what everyone else faces. No matter how much pressure God allows Satan to apply to us, God will also supply the way of escape.

God uses the temptations to work a greater degree of glory into our lives. "I am training you," God is telling us in these situations. "I am going to bless you. I am going to teach you. I am going to edify you. I am going to build you up. I promise that you will not be tempted beyond what you are able to bear."

Paul learned to endure as he suffered for the Gentiles (Acts 9:16). So much of what he wrote in the New Testament was written during times of tremendous physical and mental suffering. Still, his message of hope in Christ's provision was loud and clear: "You can endure the trial, and you will make it through. You may not think you can take it, but you can."

Recognizing the Way Out

Time and time again in my life, I have looked back and recognized just how beautiful God's provision was during every temptation and test. Yes, sometimes the pain is so deep, the

suffering so great, that you might wonder, "Can I go another day or month like this?" But then, you will see that God has a way out.

In His plan, God makes sure that we can take it. He will not allow a situation to go beyond what we are able to bear. He offers a provision for us to bear everything we go through. We can bear every single thing in our lives because no temptation has taken us but those that are common to man.

Some of us have faced times of immeasurable discouragement. Still, every time, in the end of it, God reveals Himself and says, "See! You were able to bear it. What's more, you will be able to bear the next situation and the next one and the next one."

Times of testing and trials come our way, and we not only bear them, but we grow as we are being trained. Our tongues cease from criticizing people. Our hearts stop resenting others. Our souls refuse to be divided in our love for people. All of this is possible because God encouraged us to take up His provision in the midst of temptation.

Chapter Two

THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST
MADE EVIDENT

“And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

“Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

“And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

“And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

“And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

“Their wings were joined one to another;

they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

“As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle” (Ezekiel 1:4-10).

The provision is always greater than the trial. I like to think that God has His weigh station just like those on the highways that weigh trucks before they are allowed to go across a bridge. God’s weigh station gauges the pressures and problems that we are about to go through. He weighs what we are going to go through and, because He understands our personalities and makeup, He makes sure there will be a way for us to bear what we will go through.

I preached a simple message on a recent Sunday—but one that was also very deep—on how it is of the utmost importance for families to reveal their love for one another and how much they care for each other in their circles of fellowship.

Oh, it is so easy to find fault. Anyone can do that; however, it takes so much more to reveal something that reaches beyond the fault. Grace is greater than any fault we could find.

Ezekiel stood by the river Chebar, his heart growing faint because of the persecutions he was enduring. But then God revealed to him the face of a man. It was not the face of an angel that Ezekiel saw, but the face of a man. In every trial we go through, the countenance of Jesus Christ is made evident.

Oneness, Unity, and Thankfulness

I have been thinking a lot about my marriage lately. I realize more and more that time is so limited and our love is so great. Our oneness and unity is so precious.

Knowing God together is such a personal thing. It is a very special thing to love your mate in such an intimate way, and to grow closer in any trials you may go through by taking up your provision. Personally, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

Since coming to Baltimore several years ago, I have been so blessed by the people in this city and in this church. Never before have I been so blessed with the unity of oneness, the unity of love, and the unity of thankfulness we have found here.

It has been such a blessing not to worry about problems and divisions. I have been so

free to be happy and relaxed as I enjoy a great marriage, a great Body, and a great family of God.

I love those who live in God's provision, refusing to withdraw and staying true to their commitments. There is such meaning and purpose to what we are doing here. I see such tremendous discipline in those around me, and they do not reveal the flesh at all. As a result, there has been such happiness, such joy, and such thankfulness as we serve God together. There has been great peace and great respect within our church and within our community. We have let God show us that we can bear any temptation when we live in His provision. We have learned that we can take it, no matter how great the trial.

Chapter Three

GREEN PASTURES AND
STILL WATERS

“So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

“And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents” (Numbers 9:16).

“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

“And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket

by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

“And Abraham called the name of that place [Yawehh-Yireh]: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen” (Genesis 22:10-14).

God wants us to see His provision for every decision we make. In the wilderness, Israel was led by the cloud during the day and by the pillar of fire by night. He provided the manna from heaven for food (Exodus 16:4-5). But when the nation of two-and-a-half million thirsty people came to bitter waters, they murmured against Moses—so God showed Moses a tree. When the tree was placed into the water, the water became sweet, and now they could safely drink it (see Exodus 15:25).

God made a provision for Abraham on Mount Moriah. Just as Abraham was about to offer his son Isaac (as God had told him to do), God placed a ram in the thicket for a sacrifice. As a result, Abraham declared the Lord to be “Yahweh-Yireh”—the Great Provider.

All throughout the Bible we see that God provides. According to Exodus 34:6, His provision is revealed by His name: lovingkindness,

full of mercy, full of grace, full of love, and full of forgiveness for us.

Cared for by the Great Shepherd

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever” (Psalm 23).

What a psalm this is! It reveals that even in our deepest heartaches and trouble, God is providing for us just as the shepherd provides for his sheep. David was facing terrible circumstances. His son Absalom had stolen his throne as a reaction against David for keeping him out of the palace for two years.

In exile at this point, David believed that he

would never see his palace again. He thought that he had lost everything forever. Oh, but then he realized the provision of God for his life. "The Lord is my shepherd, and I have need of nothing."

The Lord Jesus makes a provision for every situation.

I remember a precious family in Vermont. A terrible accident left a man all alone, his wife and three children dead. I can still remember how he was wandering along the highway. He didn't know where he was, and he was rushed to the hospital.

Later, he came to his senses, and we had to break the terrible news to him. "Your wife and children have gone home to be with Jesus."

As time went on, this man wound up at Bible college. He was intensely committed and uniquely dedicated, and he became a great missionary. God made this man to lie down in green pastures. He was led by the still waters, and he learned to live in God's provision.

A Divine Reversal

A woman left a husband who loved her dearly. She took their child and ran off, not even bothering to tell him why she left. Somehow

that man got hold of my number and called me.

"God has a provision for you," was all I could tell him.

"I don't see it," he said.

"That may be true, and yet, He does have a provision," I said before praying with him.

With a little effort, we found where this woman was and I visited her. We gave her the Word of God, built her up, and drew her in. Soon, she was back at home with her husband, and they grew to become a wonderful family. Instead of living in dissatisfaction with her husband's humanity, God became her provision.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16).

Oh, the Word of God is a great provision! It quickens us (Hebrews 4:12). The precious Holy Spirit is a provision, supplying divine guidance every step of the way as the Comforter that quiets our soul. When things seem dark, dreary, and dismal, there remains a provision for us.

Once we believe that, all we need to do is to live in the provision of God.

CONCLUSION

There is no temptation that has taken us, but such that is common to man. With every temptation, God provides a way of escape. We are able to bear everything. We are able to bear anything. Why? Our provision is greater than any problem. The provision of God is always greater than any pressures we go through.

I thank God for all the men and women who support godly ministries. I thank God for my secretaries and all the staff of our ministry. It has been such an amazing thing to see God's provision worked through us, as it also works through each member of the Body to glorify Jesus Christ. His heartbeat—even His pulse—is revealed through us.

God's provision has done a great work in our lives. When a ministry recognizes God's provision, men and women are miraculously healed—physically, mentally, and spiritually. We are made more than able to take all of the pres-

sure that come our way.

We have a provision as the Holy Spirit fills us and as the Word of God is imparted to us. It is a provision that was given when we received Jesus Christ, when our names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Now, all we have to do is to live in the provision of God.

If you are not born again, if you have never received Christ as your personal Savior, there is a provision for you today. It is a provision for salvation—a provision for instant forgiveness, cleansing, and purging. Simply pray, *Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I receive You as my personal Savior. Thank You for loving me so much that You shed Your blood and died for me so I can have eternal life with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*