

*Make Love the Issue*

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.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The greatest people with the most effective ministries consistently and constantly surrender to the love of God. It is shocking how few of God's people express, experience, and communicate the love of God toward themselves and others.

In this booklet, we will use the Bible to teach you where we should be, with regard to God's love in the situations of life. I am doing my very best to do what I have always done for over four decades, and that is to fight the good fight of faith. Recently, I was considering this as I spent two long nights in prayer and did not go to sleep. My aim is to express to you the necessity that love must be the issue in our lives.

With God's love as our attitude, we can learn to trust in God—in the nature of God, in the Spirit of God, by the Word of God, and in the love of God, through the faith of God, by the mercy of God, in obedience to God, in the pro-

gram of God. We will conclude, as the apostle Paul did, that there now remains faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.

*Chapter One*

## THE WORD OF LOVE

“Anew commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34).

“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

“For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John 12:47-49).

We do what we think upon. Therefore, when we think upon every single word of God, then we will live by every single word of God (Matthew 4:4). We must keep in mind that we will also be judged by every word that God has

spoken, therefore it makes sense that whatever we think, whatever we speak, and whatever we do, we should derive everything from the Word of God.

Every action of God can be summed up in this: "For God so loved the world...." (John 3:16a). Love will take care of every single problem.

### *What Is This Love?*

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;



“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

According to 1 Corinthians 13, if I have the ministry of angels or of men and have not love, I am as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. If I understand all prophecies, and mysteries, and have faith that can remove mountains, and have

not love, I am nothing. Today, throughout America and around the world, scores of people come under the heading of being nothing because they try to perform the works of love from the basis of self. They do not understand that it is the Holy Spirit who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts.

Love is kind. Love does not envy. Love does not vaunt itself—it does not draw attention to itself. Love takes on a great big death to self with Jesus Christ. Love takes on the Cross of Calvary and is revealed when we apply resurrection solutions.

All of our problems are resolved by God's love. But more than that—and man do I love this—love never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never, never quits!

### *Love Stands Fast*

Hear me now, pastors. Some of you have been talking about change and talking about a desire to quit. That is not even Christianity. *Love* built this ministry in the last three and four decades. Love has always given grace. Love has always been faithful. Love has always been evangelistic. Love has always restored mar-

riages. Love has always worked its heart out in secret works, because love has its own vertical with God, and from there it is expressed to others.

Love bears all things.

Love believes all things.

Love hopes things.

Love endures all things.

Forget prophecy. Forget knowledge. Forget faith that can remove mountains. Enter into the love of God with quietness.

We do not always have to be talking, do we? The law of God was given that every mouth may be shut (see Romans 3:19). Have you ever thought of going to God first, before coming to me and asking me questions? When you are in a crisis, how about just doing what the Bible says to do? After all these years of preaching, I hope I have taught you well enough so that you can.

I want you to understand this in the sense of love. As individual Christians, we can never determine our future. It is the Holy Spirit who resurrects a soul in co-resurrection, co-burial, and co-ascension with Christ. Therefore, through the Word of God the Holy Spirit reveals to us what we are supposed to do. And guaranteed, He will

always operate out of love.

## *Chapter Two*

# FOLLOWING IN THE FAITH

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17).

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Hebrews 13:7).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they

may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Pastors who labor in Word and doctrine are to be counted worthy of double honor. These pastors rule well, having God's kindness and conviction from God's Word. In Hebrews 13, we see that believers are to follow those who have the "rule" over them in the local assembly. Teamwork, of course, must be the way of life in a body of believers, recognizing that all of us are tempted alike, in all points (Hebrews 4:15).

But along with teamwork, there has to be leadership. Paul considered the church at Corinth to be in a very low spiritual state. He called them "babes"—perhaps because the church members in Corinth had lost sight of the significance of godly leadership (1 Corinthians 3:1-23).

### *Remember Those Who Rule*

"Remember them which have the rule." This is the Word of God, is it not? And are we to live by every single word of God? Of course, we are. So there is someone whom God has appointed to have spiritual rule over us. This leader is the one whose faith we follow.

Every believer is responsible to have a per-

sonal vertical relationship with God. Still, every believer is responsible to follow the faith of a godly leader. Why? Because God gives shepherds who will feed and guide His people in His kingdom (Jeremiah 23:4). The man of God loves God and loves the flock through the ministry that Christ committed to him.

When I am up all night and God shows me something, I am honoring my church and every single member. Each one has individual convictions. Yet, the Word instructs them to follow *my* faith as I labor in the Word and in doctrine. I must never invade a believer's privacy. All of us shall stand before God individually. God, however, has committed to me the ministry of the Gospel; so I am to speak the truth in love, without compromise (Ephesians 4:15). I am not talking about immorality or any gross sins. I am talking about the issues of unity and love and obedience and soul winning, submitting to one another in love, edifying one another, and building up one another as we pray for one another.

All I want is for us to be living epistles.

There is not a single thing God will accept in my life but one. I must love. These things are recorded in the Word that we may know the mind of Christ. People recognize that we have

eternal life when we love one another through the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We think no evil, we study to be quiet, and our mouths are closed.

That is love.

Love is always praying, believing, forbearing. We know that love will never fail us and that love will always be consistent until we die if we allow the Holy Spirit of God to fill us.

### *Obedience and Accountability*

Hebrews 13:17 says to obey them that have the rule over you. Obey? You mean that Christ expects you to obey? We obey in love, with respect, with honor, with communication. You have the final say about your life, but God has the final way! He determines the outcome of our decisions.

“Obey them that have the rule over you.”

Come on, writer of Hebrews! You keep saying that. Are you trying to make a point?

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.”

Pastors will have to give an account for those who were committed to them in their churches. In the air, after the Rapture, each of us



will be introduced to Jesus Christ. When we stand before the Lord, an account will be given of our lives toward God and toward the local pastor given to us by Christ.

It makes sense, then, that we would operate from the basis of love—making love the issue in every relationship and in everything we do.

### *Chapter Three*

## DO ALL THINGS WITH LOVE

“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

“And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13).

Every moment of my life, my attitude as well as my speech will be judged by that one word that is the solution to all problems: *love*. It is love that Jesus Christ used to change history.

Jesus said, “I am going to die on Calvary. I am going to pay for everybody’s sins. I am going to do that because I love every single one of them. I am going to give an opportunity for everyone in the world to be saved by grace and through faith, because I love them.”

He said, “There is one thing I desire: that

they would love Me and love one another. If they do so, they will know they have eternal life" (1 John 3:14).

Perhaps, you would rather not hear that somebody is to be over you. After all, you say, this is America, the land of the free. Yes, and the America of today is so filled with pride and self-exaltation. But in terms of love among people, there is a famine in the land.

First Thessalonians 5:12 says, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you...." There Paul goes again, admonishing us and talking about someone being over us.

This is what a pastor does. He admonishes. "But I heard that you preach Finished Work." We do, but that includes admonishing people in love.

Admonishment comes because of love. Furthermore, church members are to esteem pastors very highly in love for their work's sake. Why? So that we can be at peace among ourselves.

### *What Charity Does and Does Not Do*

Consider this, in 1 Corinthians 13:3: "Though I give all my food to feed the poor, and though I

give my body to be burned, and have not charity..."—what happens to me?—"...it profits me nothing."

Charity suffers long, and is kind. Charity is not envious. It doesn't puff itself up.

Charity is a beautiful word that says, "I will not exalt myself." Charity. That is the issue.

I have always built churches that are filled with charity, with crowds that keep winning souls. So many still do such a good job of it. I want to thank them for that. Still, it is important that *all* things are done with charity. We cannot afford to do one thing in this ministry without charity.

When I read about charity in 1 Corinthians 13, this is the way I have always looked at it: "And though Carl Stevens bestows all of his goods to feed the poor, and though Carl Stevens gives his body to be burned, and has not charity, it will profit him nothing. Charity in Carl Stevens suffers long, and is kind. Charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself. And when charity is in Carl Stevens, he doesn't get puffed up. He does not behave himself unseemly. He seeks not his own," the Word of God says. "He thinks no evil, because he has charity."

Jesus Christ rejoices not in iniquity, but Jesus

Christ rejoices in truth. And the truth is, we must always make sure that love is the issue.

## CONCLUSION

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. And charity in Christ never fails.

That is the Word of God. That is the dynamic of the Gospel. That is the provision of God's power. That is the nature of the Holy Spirit. That is the Word of God! Hear it, obey it, and go forward in a unique way, showing the nature of God by making love the issue.

I like to look at it like this. Picture Jesus Christ. The love of God is glowing from His face, and I get a suntan because I am looking at Him. His reflection is like a spiritual sunbath.

Do you know what we have to watch? We need to be careful of following a group that includes those who have been your friends for years instead of following after the truth of the Word of God.

Love will never let go. There are no limitations to how far love reaches, but love will al-

ways remain true to the Word of God. Finally, remember this: It doesn't matter what we say. What matters is how much we love.