

The Compassion of Christ

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
-----------------	---

COMPASSION: GOD'S MEASURE FOR MISSIONS

Chapter 2	12
-----------------	----

GATHERING MANNA: LESSONS IN GETTING TO
KNOW GOD

Chapter 3	17
-----------------	----

EAT THE CORN, GAIN COMPASSION

CONCLUSION	21
------------------	----

INTRODUCTION

In the Church of Jesus Christ, so many suffer with physical pain. When I see those who experience physical pain, I am deeply touched.

The Lord Jesus Christ sees people who have needs. He is never casual in His observation nor careless in His comprehension. But often what God sees is that so much of our pain is caused by pain from inner wounds. So much anger is caused by anger, resentment caused by resentment, fear caused by fear. And so much loneliness is caused by somebody else's loneliness.

All of those problems, including drug addiction and alcoholism, happen because of an unfulfilled capacity in the hearts of people with an unfulfilled purpose. They are people who lack an understanding of what God feels toward them and wants for them and wants to be for them. In Jeremiah 12:15, the Word of God says that He looked at the multitude of Israel's backsliders, and He had compassion on them. In

Psalm 78:38 the Word of God says that He had great compassion and forgave all their sins.

Why does God have compassion on the backsliders? He knows there is a reason for their backsliding. People are not happy, and they are trying to fulfill unfulfilled capacities and unsatisfied desires, and they can't do it. It is just a matter of time before they will burn out due to their backsliding, or their backsliding will affect their health. This booklet shows that in order to have compassion that makes a difference, we need to get to know the heart of God—a heart that was willing to die on the Cross and put on our shame so we can be clothed in His perfection.

Chapter One

COMPASSION: GOD'S MEASURE FOR MISSIONS

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

“Then he saith unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:35-38).

“And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14).

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

“So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us” (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

If you take a journey with Jesus Christ, you will see that the pain of others troubled Him deeply. That is why He said to Israel (Isaiah 63:9), “In all of your afflictions, I am afflicted.”

Moved by Compassion: The Motive for Going

Matthew 9:35 says that Jesus went about in the cities, villages, and synagogues, preaching the Kingdom of God, doing whatever He could to help the needy. He saw the multitudes and had compassion on them. He saw that they fainted and they were scattered abroad, as sheep with no shepherd.

Then He said unto His disciples, “Truly the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”

And He said, “Would you pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth people into the harvest fields?” That is a Holy Spirit prayer.

Seeing the multitudes who, in one way or another, were fainting or sick or in pain or hungry—every time, Jesus Christ was “moved with compassion.”

And when He said that the harvest field is plenteous but the laborers are few, He didn't only mean that there are not enough people who would go to win the lost; but there are few who go out motivated by compassion.

Jesus Sees Us One by One

When the Lord Jesus Christ saw the leper or the blind man or the man with the withered hand—just one individual—He was moved with compassion.

The first thing to understand in relationship to your healing is God's compassion toward you. In order to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit, you need to understand that without an exception, when Jesus looked upon multitudes, He looked upon individuals. Furthermore, He didn't just say, "God bless you." According to John 11:35, He wept. In John 11:38, He groaned. In Luke 19:41, He wept. In Hebrews 5:7, He shed many tears.

Today, whatever state you are in, never separate your condition from God's compassion nor your pain from God's Holy Spirit. Do not let the pain destroy the amazing thing that God wants to do for you.

The Right Hand of Approval

In Psalm 16:8, David said, "I have set the LORD always before [my face]: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

God was at his right hand? What did David mean by that? Jesus Christ was the expressed image of God's Person. After He purged our sins, He was seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father.

But David said, "God (Yahweh) is at my right hand"—the right hand speaking of "approval with compassion."

When Jesus Christ entered into heaven, having paid for our sins, the Father said, "I approve of what You have done for them, and I accept You, the Just, dying for the unjust" (1 Peter 3:18).

Then the Lord said, "I have compassion on them."

So the "right hand" refers to approval with compassion. That is why "whosoever will" may come to Christ. That is why the moment we believe, we are justified before we have had an opportunity to change our old ways (Romans 4:3, 4:5).

In 1 Samuel 20:42, Jonathan said to David,

“Only the LORD is between us.” These are the stages a Christian must begin to understand. David set the Lord before his face (Psalm 16:8). In pain, in need, in heartache, I learn to set the Lord before my face. Then, God is at my right hand, approving of me with compassion through the Finished Work because I am seated together in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). As believers, hid with Christ in God, no one else could be closer to Him. Furthermore, our fellowship with each other, as with David and Jonathan, is unbreakable when the Lord is between us.

Chapter Two

GATHERING MANNA: LESSONS IN GETTING TO KNOW GOD

When God gave manna to the two and a half million children of Israel (Deuteronomy 8:3), He humbled them. Here they were, delivered from slavery in Egypt but now wandering in the desert, led by a man (Moses) whom they were beginning to distrust. While they cried out for the leeks, cucumbers, and garlic they had eaten for all those years in bondage, the Lord fed them with manna to teach them that God's people must not depend on natural provisions only, but every word of God.

The manna God gave them was round and it was white (Exodus 16:14, 31). The round shape of a circle is often used to represent the eternal nature of God, having no beginning and no ending (Psalms 90:2 and 103:17). Also, the manna was very small and pure white. The Scriptures say in Psalm 12:6 that the words of

God are very pure. As silver is tried in a furnace, so is the Word of God tried and proven pure on the earth. Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is pure." Psalm 119:140a says, "Thy word is very pure." All of Scripture, every commandment of God, is pure.

So, manna speaks of the purity of God's character and the nature of God's love, in the compassion of His communication, in the promises of His provision, and in the identification of His love, dying for everything that is wrong with the entire human race.

Ground Rules for Gathering

The manna had to be gathered on a daily basis for six days (except on the day before the Sabbath when enough would be gathered for both days). Every morning before sun-up they would gather their provision for that day. If they gathered any more than what was needed, the remainder would become rotten.

They couldn't just take the manna; they had to stoop over to gather it before they could appropriate it. Likewise, to receive the Word of God in humility, we need to live in the humility of receiving it as it comes and gathering it with meekness when we come together to hear the

Word preached. Then we must appropriate all we receive.

Appropriating God's Provision

Appropriating the manna meant that it became the personal property of the one who gathered it. What's more, he could have as much as he gathered, though it had to be used that day, according to God's plan.

And do you know that God sent down millions of pounds of manna to provide for two and a half million people? It was right outside of every single tent. They could just take a walk outside in the fresh dew and gather it—millions of pounds of manna from heaven.

But according to Numbers 11:4-6, the children of Israel murmured, and the mixed multitude despised God's provision, as many despise the pure Word of God today.

The manna represents the pure Word of God. God wants us to eat of it daily. He sends the Word in its purity and power and love to heal the wounds, the pains, the emotional stress, and the heartache we all face (Psalm 107:20). Whether it is the heartache of bringing up a family during difficult times or the stress of having enough to get by financially, the Lord sends that

precious Word to heal and deliver us in the fresh dew of the morning.

Satan's Controversy

In Hosea 4:1, the word *riyb* speaks of the controversy, a case of law, that one would find in the courtroom. Satan contests God's compassion toward us, and he contests God's love for us as he tries to stop what God, because of His compassionate nature, wants to do for us. Satan is called *diabolos*, "the false accuser," in Revelation 12:9. Job was summoned to the courtroom of heaven as a primary witness against the devil's case (Job 1:6-12). Because Job didn't know he had been summoned, he had to go through the trials by faith based upon what he knew about God's character.

Another word, *antidikos*, translated as "adversary" in 1 Peter 5:8, speaks of a supernatural 'detective' who tries to find out what you know, how you feel, and how you are going to react in the courtroom in the angelic conflict between God and Satan.

Satan continually asks God for people that he can put on trial. If they come through the trial of their faith as winners, their victory is "more precious than gold that perisheth" (1 Peter 1:7).

Yet, the most beautiful thing is that when a person comes through a trial, God begins to reveal His character, because the Word of God is pure, "as silver tried in a furnace"(Psalm 12:6).

Why Trials Are Precious

When God said to Israel (Isaiah 43:10), "You are my witnesses," He did not just mean they were custodians to get out the gospel of the Kingdom of God. He meant, "You are My witnesses" as in Acts 1:8, when He said, "You will be witnesses unto Me after you receive power and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Then you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the world."

The first witness is with God in the angelic contest and the unknown trials. There, we are asked by God to exercise faith to reveal God when Satan comes after us with all the forces of hell in the trials of life. And always, Jesus Christ is the faithful Witness who pleads our case before God and against the devil as long as we are on the earth (1 John 2:1; Revelation 1:5).

Chapter Threë

EAT THE CORN, GAIN COMPASSION

In Joshua 5:12, the manna ceased. Now Israel would eat corn, the fruit of the land in Canaan. Jesus said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).

The difference between the manna and the corn is this: Manna is God giving me the Word; corn means that God now gives me the Word through His resurrection life.

The children of Israel murmured (Exodus 16 and Numbers 11) because though they were being given the Word, they didn’t have the Cross in their lives. They were being taught by Moses, one of the great preachers of that time. They were receiving the Word of God but they didn’t have the Cross. The corn, representing a seed of the Word of life, when it is thrown into the freshly turned ground of the heart, abides

alone no more. It will bring forth fruit. We now can have the resurrection life of Jesus Christ, as well as the power of that life, with the Word of God.

Appropriation, Mastication, and Assimilation

When you appropriate the Word of Life, it becomes yours. Then, you begin to chew the Word of God. You must masticate it, chewing it slowly, methodically, and progressively so it can be properly digested. After that is the process of assimilation.

Assimilation happens when the nutrients in the food are transmitted into the blood and distributed among the vital organs to give strength and power to the body. Assimilating God's Word means that by the doctrine you have received, you enter into identification with other people. You receive the nature of Christ, so when you see someone in pain, you are moved with compassion. They may not even know it, yet you are moved with brokenness and you pray for them. You go to God for them, and you want them to be healed, no matter what their needs are.

Many people, however, never allow the Word to work in them to get to that stage. Con-

sequently, they never receive the ability to identify with others. It is vital that as Christians we would be extremely wise and sensitive to people. We do not realize the pain that certain people go through—not just the physical pain but the emotional pain. Perhaps it is the pain of failure. Maybe it is the pain of having a loved one who is dying.

Recently, a doctor, his wife, and a child were all killed in an accident—only one child survived. Now imagine one child losing his mom, his dad and his sister, and he is the only one left. Just imagine what that child is going through.

Compassion Knows How to Identify

During His time on earth, Jesus Christ went in the cities, and villages, and synagogues. He saw everything that was going on in people's lives. He was moved with great compassion. He was no respecter of persons. He saw the masses of people as sheep having no shepherd.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We need to be able to look at Him in such a way that He can speak faith into our souls and bodies and circumstances, that He can express His love to us.

The apostle Paul was willing to die and go

to hell for his fellow Jews. He said, "We were gentle among you, as a nurse cherisheth her children. We are affectionately desirous of you, not willing to impart to you the gospel only, but our own souls, because you are dear to us" (see 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).

Paul wanted to do more than preach. In 1 Corinthians 4:20, he said, "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power"—the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was saying, "I want to do more than give you knowledge." He said, "I want to impart to you my own soul, the compassion I have toward you. I want to impart God's nature and what God has done for me, to you." That is real Christianity. That is having and giving the compassion of Christ.

CONCLUSION

Christianity is Christ sharing Himself with us, then we share Him with everyone we possibly can. Christianity is simply sharing who God is on the basis of what God has done with our needs and heartaches.

The Christ who came to die on the Cross was always moved when someone was in pain. Always. We need to learn how to make contact—not just in doing good works but having real contact with individuals who need what we have to offer: the compassion of Christ. This compassion can become contagious as it begins to work supernaturally against the forces of darkness and all the unhealthy pressures in the environment.

We must not be familiar with the power in prayer; we need to have an absolute expectation from God. That is when God gets the glory in the angelic realm.

Father, we pray for individuals who are going

through trials of their faith. We don't take lightly what some people are going through. We pray that You would speak faith into each situation. Whatever it is, You know it. We pray they would receive power in the Holy Spirit—Your divine provision—because of Your compassion. We ask You for miracles, victories, and deliverance, and we ask it with gratitude and thanksgiving in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.