

# *The Great Cover-Up*

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace Church 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 messages preached by Pastor Stevens.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Copyright © 1996

Grace Publications is a ministry of  
Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>INTRODUCTION</i> ..... | 5 |
|---------------------------|---|

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <i>Chapter 1</i> ..... | 7 |
|------------------------|---|

## *THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS*

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| <i>Chapter 2</i> ..... | 13 |
|------------------------|----|

## *WHO COULD STAND?*

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| <i>Chapter 3</i> ..... | 17 |
|------------------------|----|

## *GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND MAN'S FORGIVENESS*

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| <i>CONCLUSION</i> ..... | 21 |
|-------------------------|----|



## INTRODUCTION

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7).

“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

In order for this booklet to have the impact upon us that God desires, it is vital that we consider a very relevant eternal premise. God establishes a premise for every category of truth and then we, by faith, allow the Holy Spirit to amplify, reiterate, and magnify that category so we may implement it in our lives.

The premise for this message is the righteousness of God. Without the operational force of God's righteousness in my life, I am unrighteous. I am unrighteous if I establish my own righteousness in any area of life. Any thought or concept outside of the gift of God's righteousness is unrighteousness. I am unrighteous if I look upon another believer in any way apart from God's righteousness.

Today, men and women, both in the Church and outside of it, are filled with unrighteous thoughts toward others and toward themselves. This should not be so, for God has clothed us with His salvation and covered us with His righteousness. *This is the greatest cover-up in history!* May these words release and revive us as we consider what it means to be hid with Christ in God.

## *Chapter One*

# THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).

“For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:3-4).

“My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt” (Psalm 71:23-24).

These verses teach us that God’s righteousness is imputed without works as a free gift at

the point of salvation. If God declares every single believer to be righteous, then I cannot think a single thing outside of the gift of righteousness. Any thought toward myself or others that falls short of the gift of grace is an unrighteous thought.

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6). All human righteousnesses are as filthy rags before God. People live in poor self-images because of their unrighteous thoughts. Their self-images are desecrated and experientially deprived.

The Psalmist, in Psalm 71, determined to declare the righteousness of God all the day long. The righteousness of God’s testimonies is everlasting and they give understanding (Psalm 119:144).

“For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (Romans 3:3-4).

When a person believes, his faith is counted to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God’s



righteousness has been purchased by Jesus Christ's redeeming blood and is imputed by grace through faith to undeserving recipients. In Romans 3:4, God is saying that He wants to teach us the way to be overcomers when we are being judged.

On the other hand, Romans 3:5 teaches that there is no possible way for self-righteousness to commend God's righteousness, and neither can unrighteousness judge God's righteousness that acts in justice to forgive or condemn, depending on the recipient's response or reaction to God's Finished Work.

### ***Thinking in Grace***

Any thought outside of grace is an unrighteous thought. Any conversation detached from a Finished Work position is a human conversation without divine consent. Any principle of evaluation without redemptive values is a principle that operates in the realm of Adamic relativity.

God is a just God. He is righteous in all His ways and His work is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4). There is no unrighteousness in Him (Psalm 92:15). Psalm 5:4 tells us there is no evil in Him. God doesn't promote sin in His Kingdom (Habbakuk 2:13). Then how can God, who

loves righteousness and justice (Psalm 33:5; Isaiah 61:8), forgive someone who falls seven times in a day? Proverbs 24:16 says that the righteous man falls seven times and gets up, but the wicked falls into mischief and stays down. What kind of God would cover up something like that?

How can a God who is perfect in all of His ways (Psalm 18:30) tell us that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness? How can He do that when someone simply confesses? Without evidence, without works, without proof, He forgives and cleanses. How can God say that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound? The following Scriptures tell us how:

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Is it right that Jesus Christ died for the sins

of the whole world, bearing them upon His own body? Is it fair for God to cover up the sins of the Church—when those in it should be more responsible than anyone else—and yet allow the unsaved person to die in his sin (John 8:21)? Was it sensible for Jesus to bear every sin that mankind has ever committed? It was sensible to the Father, because He so loved the world and wanted to make a way so that believers should not perish but have eternal life in Him (John 3:15-16).

### ***Covered by His Hand***

“And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a [cleft] of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by” (Exodus 33:22).

The greatest cover-up of all time is for God Almighty to take an imperfect man or woman and hide them in Himself, to cover them with His hand, so that He cannot see their sin. We are hidden in the Rock, our Savior, Jesus Christ. We have been covered by His nail-pierced hand. His glory passes by us and He covers us with His hand so He cannot see our sins. This is unheard of! The average Christian never considers what this means, and it is so difficult for Finished Work

believers to communicate in a world of Christianity that hasn't experienced something that is finished.

We are hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3). We are in Christ as new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are seated above (Ephesians 2:6), and joined to His body, flesh, and bones (Ephesians 5:30). We are one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). Purchased, redeemed, bought, hidden, cleansed, perfected, and complete—we are all of these things!

Growing in grace, we will become in our experience what He has already made us to be in our position. We use recovery, by naming our sins and forsaking them, to get up and go on with God.

## *Chapter Two*

# WHO COULD STAND?

“Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:2-3).

When I pray for myself, that is supplication. Praying for others is intercession. What I want to focus on in this chapter is the great statement made in verse 3 of Psalm 130: “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” If God were to take account of sin, who could stand before Him? If He were to scrutinize and give careful attention to iniquities (Job 13:26), none could stand before God, before men, or before angels.

We can be thankful that marking iniquities is not a part of God’s character. Instead, Christ, in all His glory and majesty, sees opportunities in our failures, opportunities to manifest His

great love. Why else would He say of the harlot in Luke 7:47 “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

The Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin. Our iniquities quench His activity in our lives and break fellowship with Him. If we continue in sin, God will bring chastisement to restore the believer’s relationship with His character and nature, just as a loving father would do with his child.

### ***Covered All Day Long***

“And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders” (Deuteronomy 33:12).

“I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live” (Psalm 119:141-144).

God covered Benjamin all the day long.

Deuteronomy 33:12 calls him “the beloved,” and the Word of God says that he will dwell in safety and that he shall be covered; *God* shall cover him all the day long. Yet, if you read the story of Benjamin, you will find some shocking things about him that would repudiate any appreciation that you’d ever have for the man.

Benjamin was not the sweet little boy that Deuteronomy 33:12 pictures him to be. We will not go into details of his life here, but Benjamin’s life was not a credible one; I’ll just say this very carefully, neither was his tribe or the group that was built around him. Still, the Word of God says that God would cover Benjamin all the day long and forever! The reason is found in this message.

In Judges 19-21, an awful incident at Gibeah prompted the other tribes of Israel to nearly wipe out Benjamin as a tribe. A man’s concubine had been raped and murdered, and the Benjamites of the town refused to turn over those who committed the crime. Those other tribes attacked Gibeah and Benjamin; only six hundred men of Benjamin remained when the battles were over (Judges 20:47).

Who was to be one of the descendants of those six hundred survivors? None other than

the Apostle Paul, “For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Romans 11:1).

Surely, the righteousness of God’s testimonies are from everlasting to everlasting. His testimony was that Benjamin would be beloved and covered, and Paul’s work—the fruit of which continues to this day—is the result of God keeping His testimony.

This is why it is so important not to forget His precepts, which include the authoritative rules of divine redemption, divine grace, and divine love, and which govern the authoritative implementation of His forgiveness and grace.

The Psalmist said that he opened his mouth and panted in longing for the commandments of God, for he knew that God’s Finished Work perfection was the end of all the commandments (Psalm 119:131).



### *Chapter Three*

## GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND MAN'S FORGIVENESS

“But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared” (Psalm 130:4).

The forgiveness of God is a merciful surgery, a cutting away of iniquity and sin. He separated our sins from us. The Hebrew word *celiychah* indicates that God's forgiveness is *not* man's forgiveness. Men have a forgiveness that is based upon thoughts outside of the gifts of grace and righteousness (Romans 5:17-21). God's forgiveness comes from a perfect justice that demands the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto

justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:17-21).

Because the demands of justice have been satisfied through the perfect righteousness of Christ, God is saying, "I am free to give divine forgiveness, and with my forgiveness comes divine forgetfulness of all sin. I remember your sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17). 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins (Isaiah 43:25).' "

### ***A Forgiveness That Is Not Ours***

Jesus Christ is revealing something that is vital for us to understand. He forgives with a forgiveness that is not ours! Shame on believers who, in the name of forgiveness, still talk for hours with counselors about their past. "I am the Lord," He says. "I forgive and forget through a divine decree of perfect justice. When your un-

righteous thoughts remember what you or someone else has done, you are not all right with me.” When we dwell upon our past, we are acting as if God’s merciful surgery was never accomplished. The divine cover-up is not understood.

“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

Jesus came not to be ministered unto. He came to minister and give His life as a ransom for all (Matthew 20:28). Our sins were paid for and covered at great cost. For this reason, Jeremiah 50:20 tell us, “In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.”

If I judge another for his sins, I am seeking something that can’t be sought, trying to find something that cannot be found. God has forgiven and forgotten *all* of our sins. God will take the chastisement for the sins of the person I am judging and put it upon me.

In relation to the party being judged, the sins are already gone and covered; God cannot deal with him after his sin because the sin has been

paid for by Jesus Christ. And, because I will not recognize His payment for their sins, I reap the effects of what I am talking about, for I have rejected the covering of grace, redemption, and the Blood.

God forgives with a forgiveness that we will never understand unless we believe His Word, live by it, and allow ourselves to be sanctified by it. What does Psalm 130:4 mean when it says there is forgiveness with Him that He might be feared? It means that once He's forgiven someone, we are not to toy with that forgiveness, even as it relates to ourselves.

His forgiveness is divine, produced by an eternal decree coming out of perfect justice. His forgiveness is not to be presumed against. Jesus Christ has paid for all sin and sins—who I am and what I've done—taking them all upon His own body. He did it once and for all and we are not to play games with the subject. I must fear Him in reverence (Hosea 3:5). I must accept His forgiveness and not presume against it by competing with unrighteousness expressed by my self-righteousness in human forgiveness.

## CONCLUSION

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

This is the glorious Gospel. He puts us in the cleft of His Rock, Jesus Christ, and covers us with His hand. We don't put ourselves into that Rock. He puts us there Himself: “When you believe, I put you in the cleft of the Rock and then I cover you with my redemptive hands.” Therefore, who can lay any charge to God's elect? Christ has justified us; therefore, who can condemn? He died and is risen and is making intercession for us. If God be for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)?

“In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. Be thou my

strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man" (Psalm 71:1-4).

The Lord is stating a great principle here. He delivers the believer out of the hand of those who are cruel and unrighteous. Who are the cruel and unrighteous? Those who think outside of grace, those who uncover what He has covered by His Blood. Anyone, no matter how noble and good he appears, is cruel and unrighteous when he acts outside of the redemptive rights of God's forgiveness.

God's dealings with us are always in mercy (Psalm 119:124), and His mercy endures forever. By His mercy, He has covered and forgotten our sins and they are to be remembered no more.