

Communion
Within the Church

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

INTRODUCTION 5

Chapter 1 7

PLACED AS IT PLEASES HIM

Chapter 2 11

NO LIFE APART FROM THE BODY

Chapter 3 16

THE CUP OF BLESSING, THE BROKEN BREAD

CONCLUSION 23

INTRODUCTION

Every Christian has been bought and paid for by the blood of Jesus Christ; we are not our own. Each one of us is a member of the Body, of which Christ is the Head; and our Head would like us, the Body, to be His life, His flesh, His very bones. Even the weakest member of our Body is still Christ's. The one who has failed still belongs to Him, but few in the Church today discern this truth. Each member of the Body must be treated as Christ because Christ possesses him; therefore, we are to honor the Body, identify with it, and express life to it.

When I look at another person in the congregation I cannot afford to get caught up in personality clashes, resentment, bitterness, insecurity, or fear. Instead, I must love each member, for each one is in Christ and, therefore, he is a part of me.

No one is perfect at this point, but in heaven,

everyone will be perfected and we will spend eternity together.

Knowing this, we are to love each other as we grow, mature, and take our particular places as particular members of His Body. There is no need to rush out from your particular place and into someone else's. God has placed each member in the Body according to His design. This booklet will help us all to realize the benefit of staying in our particular place and learning how the whole Body is blessed by the diversity of its members.

Chapter One

PLACED AS IT PLEASES HIM

The Body is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is the Body. A body cannot separate itself from its head, neither can the head separate itself from the body. The head perpetuates its life through the body.

Everyone who receives Jesus Christ has become a member of His Body and a partaker of His life. In 1 Corinthians 8:9-13, Paul communicated the principle that any time the weakest member of the Body is offended, Christ is offended as well: "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for

whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

The Oneness of the Body

Ephesians 5:30 defines it: “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” and every single member of the Body is a member in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27), and a new creation in Christ.

God places every member of the Body as it pleases Him. When one member of the Body rejoices, all rejoice. When one member of the Body suffers, all suffer. When one member of the Body is honored, all members are edified. We weep when one is weeping; we laugh when one is laughing. Over and over in the Scriptures we find a consistent expression and manifestation of the oneness of the life of Jesus Christ in His spiritual Body.

The ability to discern the Body of Jesus Christ is extremely important. Many have a disillusioned attitude toward His Body, not discerning the variety of gifts that are at work. The Body is one, yet it is very diverse. Some believers cannot

understand the Body's diversity. As a result, there is confusion and even separation regarding the gifts God gives.

The diversity of gifts is meant to edify the Body, not to divide it. These gifts should be used for building people up, but instead, one will not recognize certain gifts of another. Jealousy, insecurity, and pride cause division. When these attitudes get in, believers don't have the liberty to express their diverse gifts as God meant for them to be expressed.

Diversity and Unity

The Body should always have unity, but it will always be filled with diversity. Diversity complements, balances, builds, and edifies the whole Body unto the maturity of our Head, Jesus Christ. From the beginning of time, many ministries have had divisions because there was no understanding of spiritual diversity.

To properly discern the Body, we must first see that the Body is Christ, and Christ is the Body. Next, we must recognize that every single member of the Body is a *particular* member, sharing a portion of the whole. Not only is each one a particular member, but each one is a particular member put in place by God. Therefore, we must

understand that God gives His supreme grace to each individual He places in His organism, by giving them His spiritual life.

Chapter Two

NO LIFE APART FROM THE BODY

The one who knows how to discern the Body realizes that if he withdraws from the Body it is like the arm withdrawing from the shoulder. Picture my arm departing from my shoulder, saying, "Pardon me, I'm tired of just hanging around that shoulder." The arm somehow becomes detached and claims that it has a right to be his own member. If it were possible for my arm to detach itself from my shoulder, my arm would be dead! There would be no life in it. The arm that's detached isn't receiving any life from my head.

Perhaps you would rather talk about legs. Suppose your good leg got up and left your body. It just decided to become detached. You can talk to that leg all you want, but you cannot talk that leg into living. It's been severed from your body. You can make it look any way you want it

to look. Go ahead, dress it up! Hide the place where it's been cut off. If it's a woman's leg, you can put on the prettiest nylons in the world. But that leg is simply a corpse.

An arm or a leg on its own couldn't even get subjective—it's just dead. It couldn't say, "Well, I've been alone with God." There's nothing wrong with being alone with God for certain seasons. But, beware of those who consistently disappear and talk of being alone with God. Eventually, they become Lone Rangers for God. Such people detach themselves from the Body and they cannot receive any life from the Head, Jesus Christ. Many hyper-spiritual, subjective believers treat the Body of Jesus Christ like this. They have gone beyond the mere diversity of gifts and have become detached.

Life for the Weak

Jesus Christ pours His life into every member of the Body. Because Satan is constantly trying to take advantage of God's people, the weaker the member, the more they need God's life. When the life of Christ is not flowing in the Body, Satan uses his supernatural skills, wisdom, and power to his advantage. Paul told the Corinthian believers in that local assembly to forgive the man

who had repented of incest, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Paul spoke of how it grieved him that there were groups within that church saying, “I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:12). Satan was able to take advantage of that Body because the life of the Head wasn’t flowing through it. People in Corinth had no true discernment of Jesus Christ as the Head of the Body.

The time has come: Satan knows his time is short. We must begin to realize how imperative it is to discern the Body of Jesus Christ.

Developing Discernment

“LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear” (Psalm 10:17).

Let’s take notice of how discernment of the Body is developed. Reckoning that there is no way the Body of Christ can function without the humility of its Head, this verse describes three things God does for the humble. First, He hears their desire. Secondly, He prepares their hearts. Finally, He causes their ear to hear. In humility, Jesus pours out His Spirit through every mem-

ber of the Body. Then, the Body is able to function in prosperity.

God begins to do great things when humility is present in the Body. The Scriptures tell us that every spiritual promotion comes through humility. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4). Humility brings in the greatness of Jesus Christ.

"When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person" (Job 22:29). There are periods of time when we may experience being cast down. But God will deliver the humble person who is in this condition.

The Work of Humility

Some sincere people come to me and say, "I know what the Word of God says, but this is what I'm going through. How do I get out of it?" There's no way out of it without the humility of the Cross; no way out except for taking that lowly place with Jesus Christ, identifying with Him, and letting His life flow to us and through us.

"But he giveth more [greater] grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6). The humble

person receives *greater* grace; he is honored and exalted, and receives spiritual riches. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6). At a point in His plan, God chooses to exalt us. The original setting of this text reveals that the humble person stays humble. It appears that everyone is taking advantage of him, yet he remains lowly. He continues to sit in the last seat; he doesn’t exercise certain rights that he might have, but, in due time, he is exalted by God.

It is time to honor the Body of Jesus Christ. When people are operating in greater grace, there doesn’t have to be incompatibility in relationships. A husband doesn’t have to leave his wife; teen-agers don’t need to rebel. The spirit of faith replaces the spirit of fear. There is no reason to withdraw and become detached when a situation comes up.

I want you to understand how beautifully humility works as God exalts and promotes. He meets the desires of our hearts, lifts us up, and promotes us in due season, all because we take up the spirit of humility and allow the Holy Spirit to make us willing to be the last and the least, in childlike faith.

Chapter Three
THE CUP OF BLESSING,
THE BROKEN BREAD

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

There are many strangers’ voices today. These voices are crafty voices, very shrewd and cunning. The work of Satan is expanding and extending itself, permeating the fiber of the Christian community. A dull spirit comes in, characterized by familiarity, insensitivity, and carelessness. Humility is gone.

Something happens in school and the teacher is blamed. Something happens in the youth group and the youth director is blamed. In these cases, the heart is not prepared for the Body. The ears are not open to hear from God so there is no hearing because there is no humility. It's foolish to blame someone else for what God is trying to do in us. If we would humble ourselves, God would cause our ears to hear. He would prepare our hearts and give us His desire for the situation.

Pride causes a person to detach and isolate himself from others, making decisions that only benefit himself. A humble person, on the other hand, always makes decisions to build up others, to bear their burdens, and to seek for their benefit and prosperity over his own.

Capacity for Communion

“The cup of blessing,” in 1 Corinthians 10:16, speaks of our capacity for communion as sons of God; the communion of one bread reveals our capacity as partakers of one body. Our capacity—the measure of our ability to receive and to give—comes through the blessing of the Blood in our relationships. Our cup of blessing speaks of our capacity to relate to one another in our

sonship, discerning the Body through His blood. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Jesus Christ has established the means of fellowship. We are to bless the cup, which represents the blood He shed on Calvary. Our capacity in relationships is revealed by the blood of the New Covenant. In the Old Testament tabernacle, the blood of the sacrificial animals was sprinkled on everything, but its effects were only temporary. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats ... sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14).

The blood of Christ washes away sin; it purges the conscience. According to Romans 5:9, the blood takes care of our justification, as we appropriate it by faith (Colossians 1:20-23). It reveals to us freedom and purity, as it washes over our hearts, minds, ears, and tongues. It takes over our frame of reference and our souls. His blood becomes our capacity to bless other body members.

Breaking Bread

1 Corinthians 10:16 also talks about “the bread which we break.” Shed blood and broken bread—these are the two things that characterize discerning the Body of Jesus Christ. Let me illustrate it for you. Let’s say I must communicate something to one of my associate pastors. I must remember that he is redeemed, purchased by Jesus Christ’s own blood. But Jesus also gave His body on the cross. My fellowship with that pastor must be around the shed blood *and* broken body of Jesus Christ. Through the same Holy Spirit of my Head, by faith I allow Jesus Christ to break me and bring me into humility. Then, I am able to express life derived from Jesus Christ to this pastor, and our fellowship is around the Blood.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man

shall bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:1-5).

This is a tremendous principle. When there's repentance, sin cannot stop the power of God from going through a ministry. It's not sin that stops God's power, but rather, it's a heart that's deceived—someone who thinks he is something when he owes his success to the fact that he was purchased by Christ's blood and bought with the power of His broken body. We are one Body and we're all partakers of the one Bread of Life.

When I look out at an audience, I don't see the work of a man or men. I see the work of Christ. When I watch dear folks going to the foreign mission field, I don't see a work of a man, I see the work of God.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:9-13).

Blessing the Cup

Jesus Christ penetrates into the fellowship of God's people when the cup is blessed. Capacity

for the life of Christ is encouraged in the Body. We become broken bread as Jesus became broken bread. He had no place to lay His head. Dying on the cross for the guilty, He became guilty, bearing the sins of us all. Broken Bread: His life flowing through me and you; life that cannot be divided. Jesus Christ cannot be divided when His life penetrates into His people's hearts. Only those things that come from the subjective soul life of men can be divided.

What can we add to the blood of Jesus Christ? Nothing, of course. The Blood has cleansed us from all sin. There's nothing more that we can do but have brokenness. A broken and contrite heart God will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

1 Corinthians 10:24 says, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." In studying this passage, I discovered that I am not to seek for that which will profit me, but I am to seek for that which will profit others. This is good, even for businessmen and companies, when it's understood properly and spiritually.

Seek not your own, but for another man's wealth; bear another's burdens; seek what will benefit others. This isn't natural or normal, humanly speaking. This is Body life. It's not pleasing men, it's not promoting people in the

flesh, it's not exalting people who feel a need to be exalted. It's something entirely different. It is humbling ourselves in the sight of God, esteeming others, and laying down our lives without reaction or resistance, without superficiality. I am to discern the portion of Christ in others, the life of the Head flowing through the Body.

Think of all those who have Jesus Christ inside of them. Each one represents Christ's own body. Each one is a new creation, redeemed, seated above in heavenly places, and bought by His blood to be a part of Him. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17). This is the picture of the Body of Christ.

CONCLUSION

I want to thank all the teachers in our school and Bible college for their commitment to spiritual excellence in Jesus Christ. It's a commitment to humility with a life laid down, being motivated by love. For every administrator, Bible study leader, student, and usher, I thank God. For every believer-priest in our Body, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

God sent you to serve. He sent you to be ministered unto by the life of the Body. Somewhere you heard Him call and you answered the call. You have lived through testings, suffering, trials, and persecution. You were all a part of it all, and now you're ready to experience the blessings that come with humility. You were sent and you stayed in the place of God.

Unless we, as believers, humble ourselves and pray, there is no way under heaven our nation will see revival. We must live by every

word of God, through recovery and following after Him. Let's prove our work, always making sure it's the work of Christ—the work of love, redemption, reconciliation, and edification. Our work must be the work of laying down our lives, the work of compassion, the work of faith, the work of selflessness.

One of the characteristics of greatness is humility that abides in the darkness, without sight. One of the great expressions of faith is to have the ability of grace to be sustained by Him who is invisible, when all the visible odds are against you. One of the great marks of a local assembly, such as the one I have had the privilege to experience the life of Christ with, is to be a people who draw near.

Let us draw near to the cup of communion. Let us draw near to the broken bread. When we draw near, no matter how we are feeling, the spiritual and physical weariness goes away. We are many members, but one Body; many members partaking of the one Bread of Life. Let's always recognize Christ as the Head of our Body with His doctrine governing our relationships, the Finished Work controlling our fellowship, and spiritual gifts for our edification and production.