

Don't Be Intimidated

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 © 2004

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 5

Chapter 1 7

SATAN'S ATTACK PROGRAM

Chapter 2 10

IS JESUS A STRANGER TO YOU?

Chapter 3 15

JESUS DRAWS NEAR TO OPEN EYES AND HEARTS

CONCLUSION 22

INTRODUCTION

One of the most subtle attacks of Satan against God's people is intimidation. With intimidation, his goal is to incapacitate believers in their response to truth, to challenge the unconditional nature of their love, and to hinder the boldness of their faith so that ultimately they will stop growing in Christ.

Moses felt intimidated because he had an impediment in his speech. When God spoke to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, the devil whispered, "You cannot speak. You talk funny." Moses confessed that he was slow of speech, and after much discussion, God appointed Aaron to speak for him. (Exodus 4:10-16).

Before Moses, Abraham was intimidated because God had not done what He had promised to do, and he reasoned that time was running out. The child of promise was not yet conceived, and Abraham became intimidated because of his age and Sarah's. As a result, he went in with

Hagar (at Sarah's request), and Ishmael—a wild man—was born. Abraham just could not wait for God's Word to be fulfilled through faith in God's grace. In spite of his sin, in God's perfect timing, God came through, and Isaac was born.

Job was another man of God who was constantly facing intimidation. His three friends sat down with him and did not talk to him for seven days and seven nights. Then, when they started talking, everything they said was part of Satan's plan to intimidate Job.

In this booklet, we examine the story of the two disciples who were walking toward Emmaus when they met the resurrected Lord, Jesus. Those men were confused and could have been intimidated by fear and failure, but God loved them back into a capacity to serve Him.

Chapter One

SATAN'S ATTACK PROGRAM

“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

Instances of intimidation are recorded throughout the Word of God. Peter was intimidated by the crowd who recognized him during Jesus' trials—so intimidated that he went out and wept bitterly after he denied Christ three times.

Before he met Jesus and became the apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus instituted a program of intimidation against Christians. His goal was to kill them off and to have as many as possible sent to prison. After his conversion, as he worked to spread the Gospel throughout the world, Paul became the focus of the intimidation. He endured shipwrecks, stoning, arrests, and attacks from Christians and non-Christians alike.

Much of Satan's program of intimidation was focused on Jesus Christ Himself. His own family members questioned Him, and He could not do much among them because of their unbelief. When His own disciples forsook Him, the devil was using them to try to intimidate Jesus.

When the disciples slept while Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsamane, that was an attempt to intimidate him. When Judas betrayed Him with a kiss and the soldiers and the mob came after Jesus with torches and swords, that was Satan exercising intimidation.

Constant intimidation—that is Satan's way.

Refuse Intimidation, Refuse to Intimidate

As the pastor of this particular church, I want to encourage you: Don't be intimidated. What's more, don't be used in Satan's program of intimidation.

Refuse to allow Satan to intimidate you through people, as he constantly tries to do. The devil wants to intimidate you by causing you to question who you are in Christ. Hell wants to intimidate you into not recognizing your potential in Christ. Satan attempts to intimidate you from having love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). The devil will always

try to intimidate you through the gossip and criticism of people who choose to ignore God's love.

Yet, in spite of the constant attacks involved in Satan's program, God is ready to redeem it all as He makes all things work together for good to those who love Him, "who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Chapter Two

IS JESUS A STRANGER TO YOU?

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

“And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

“And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

“But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

“And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

“And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass therein these days?

“And he said unto them, What things? And

they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (Luke 24:13-19).

Intimidated by the turn of events that led to Jesus Christ's death and an empty tomb, two disciples headed out of Jerusalem to Emmaus. As they walked and talked, trying to figure out what it was all about, Jesus drew near, but they did not recognize Him at first.

How many times have we gone through times where Jesus was right there with us in our furnace of affliction, but we were unaware of His presence? Our eyes of faith could not behold Him, even though He was there in our deepest trial. Jesus is with us in the midst, no matter what people try to do against us.

As Jesus joined these disciples on the road to Emmaus, He wondered aloud, "Why are you communicating like this? Why are you communicating such negativity and sadness?" This was a very beautiful approach by Jesus. He wanted to know why the disciples were communicating things that were not able to build them up. The resurrection had happened but they did not believe the report. At this point, they could not fathom the truth that Jesus was really alive.

The fact is that many of us do not fathom it either. I would like to see every believer live in resurrection life twenty-four hours a day. That is what I would like to experience in my own life.

Think of it. Just as He had told them, Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, had died on the Cross, shedding His precious blood. Now, Just as He said, He was resurrected in a precious, glorified body. Yet, these disciples considered Him a stranger.

That scene on the road to Emmaus represents an expression of a human heart weighed down by intimidation. Jesus Christ is alive, glorified, and we see Him as a stranger.

Jesus Christ is a stranger to Christians who criticize. He is a stranger to those who judge and bring up other people's sins. He is a stranger to those who speak unkind words and think unkind thoughts.

The Sadness of Human Reasoning

These disciples were so occupied with sadness. They were doing so much reasoning that Jesus, who was walking with them, was not honored, revered, respected, or known.

When intimidation gets to me and I withdraw and get sad, my precious, glorified Christ

becomes a stranger. When I just sit in my seat, act forlorn, and refuse to rejoice, I have made Jesus a stranger to me.

How does a believer avoid this pattern of thinking? Hear every message you can hear. God wants His house full and His people to hear every single message, because every message is going to tell us something that will help our lives eternally.

On the road to Emmaus, the disciples were caught up in reasoning and rationalization concerning the events of the day. More and more, I am convinced that I cannot judge a single situation. We do not know *anything* unless God reveals it to us in black and white. We cannot afford to speak about things we cannot fathom. Only by faith can we discern truth.

Take Care with Your Remarks and Opinions

Purpose to be careful with your remarks. Be careful about expressing your opinions. Be careful with your evaluations. Be careful. Why do I say this? Because, you may just make the glorified, ever-living Christ, who lives in you, a stranger in the peace of your redemption.

Again and again, I have purposed in my heart not to communicate negatives and not to

listen to them. Not listening to them can be hard, especially as a pastor. Still, I purpose to keep every conversation focused on redemption and reconciliation, with the Cross as my frame of reference.

I cannot understand how some people can hear the messages they have been hearing and yet remain befuddled and upset because of a problem in a relationship. Sometimes it is a such a little thing that can make a person sad. If this is the case, then Jesus Christ has become a stranger. The intimidation process of Satan has frustrated them.

Chapter Three

JESUS DRAWS NEAR TO OPEN EYES AND HEARTS

In the midst of the disciples' disappointment on their way to Emmaus, Jesus drew near. He did not want the disciples to remain in their sorrow. He wanted to reveal something wonderful to them.

God's people need to know how to walk and not be sad. We ought to be tough and have a chin that can stand a spiritual punch. We ought to have fortitude that can take anything that God allows to come our way. Every child of God ought to stand with legs of iron and feet of brass (Daniel 2:33; Revelation 2:18). Our loins are girt about with truth. We should be wearing our breastplates of righteousness and our helmets of salvation (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Jesus Christ is risen! Nothing can change that fact. Not only has He risen, He has ascended to the right hand of the Father.

Knowing these truths, how can there be a reason to be downcast? We are hid in the Body of Christ. We have been baptized by the Holy Spirit. We have the opportunity to be filled with the Spirit moment by moment.

Still, there are times when Jesus draws near and says, "Why are you so sad?"

The disciples could not see Jesus at that point. We are the same way. We hear so much about Jesus, but we do not see Him in certain situations. We listen to so much talk about Him, and still we fail to see Him in our particular situation.

The disciples had heard that the tomb was empty. The women who went to the grave told them of angels dressed in celestial white. "Jesus is risen," they declared. "He is alive!"

Those disciples could not see Him, however, because Jesus Christ can only be discovered by faith. They heard the word that He had risen, but what they had heard did not produce faith (Hebrews 4:2). So they saw Him not, and they started down a new road. They were sad and troubled, and they were leaving Jerusalem—the place of peace—to go to Emmaus, which means "wandering." Their eyes of faith were not single and now their minds were wandering (Luke

11:34).

The Foolishness of Faithlessness

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

“Oh, fools.” Here is the loving, tender, glorified tongue of Jesus addressing His disciples. “Don’t you know that the just shall live by faith? Do away with your reasoning in Adam. Don’t you know that you must not walk by sight?”

Every time God calls His people “fools,” it is always said with regard to their lack of faith. When the disciples panicked on the boat in the storm, Jesus called them “ye of little faith” (Matthew 8:26). We are fools when we give in to the intimidation around us and refuse to live by faith. We do not have to be bogged down by sadness. We do not need to be stuck in depression or to go through life with a wandering mind, threatened by intimidation.

The Word Makes the Difference

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

“And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

“But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

“And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

“And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

“Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

“And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in break-

ing of bread.

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (Luke 24:27-36).

How did Jesus deal with the disciples’ slowness of heart? He opened their understanding through the Word of God. He started with the books of Moses and continued through the prophets to show the disciples the reality of what had happened. He expounded the truth about Himself.

This is the most beautiful thing about our Lord. He did not forsake His disciples even when they were intimidated and walking by sight. That must have been such a precious moment when they finally recognized Him.

Here was this intimidated, defeated group of men, and Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, was about to break bread with them. I like to imagine that He did something like this: He took the bread and the wine, and all of a sudden, there before the disciples were the nail-scarred hands—then, He vanished.

He vanished because He wanted them to learn to walk by faith and to worship by faith. He wanted them to believe.

Now these men had open eyes and burning

hearts and they were running back to Jerusalem—the place of peace. They were going back to peace. They took the broken bread. They drank the wine. They saw the nail-scarred hands and they witnessed His glorified love. They had fellowship with His Spirit as He shared the Word of God with them. Those men would go back to Jerusalem in the power of God.

Love Came Down

All of that happened because the God of the universe took time out and walked with two men when they were sad. He walked with them when they were off, and He walked with them when they were wandering out of His plan.

The open house, the open Scriptures, the open hearts, the open eyes, the open attitudes—they all were opened by Jesus Christ. God's availability brought into their hearts a brand-new, astonishing experience.

The Lord wants to give us the life, the peace, the attitude, and the power where we can be ourselves in God. We can live as individuals in grace and be led by the Spirit and the Word. We can be bold and confident.

Let others judge by appearances and by their standards. Jesus Christ is our standard. Let's go

forward in His mercy. Do not be intimidated by anything the devil throws at us. The Lord of the universe is in our midst, and we shall not be moved!

CONCLUSION

Do not be intimidated by sight. Do not be intimidated by what the world says. Do not be intimidated by trials and by their findings in your life. Do not be intimidated by accusations or by people's plans to demote you and ruin your reputation and assassinate your character. Do not be intimidated by religious concepts or by what others think about the way you worship God.

Instead of rationalizing your situation, let faith reign.

The Spirit of God is saying to your heart, "Don't let your slowness of heart intimidate you. Abide in the Finished Work." Do not judge your spirituality by your moods and your situation. You can only judge your spirituality on the basis of the Word of God and the truth of Calvary, the truth of His resurrection, and the truth of His ascension."

Judge your spirituality based on who you are in Jesus Christ. You are complete. You are

whole. You are full. You are hid. You are cleansed. You are purged and made perfect in Him. You are redeemed. You are seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6).

Just live the life of Christ by faith in His rest. In the face of the storm, He rests in His love (Zephaniah 3:17).