

*Standing Firm in
Godly Convictions*

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.

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

Convictions are so vital to a Christian's life. Often, the dilemmas we encounter are due to rejecting God's provision because we have not yet been established in godly convictions. But by having proper convictions, we allow the world to see the character of God manifested through our frail humanity. These convictions cause us to understand the purpose that we were created and redeemed by God.

Convictions are necessary in order for the believer to stand firm in the face of the attacks that come from Satan, the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). We must have categorical convictions of loyalty, love, and edification. Sadly, many desire a Christianity that requires no personal accountability and no personal obligation to the Cross, and that's why they are condemned rather than converted by convictions.

This booklet will reveal the beauty of living

in Finished Work convictions based on divine mobilization and spiritual motivation. Through these convictions, we can experience the union we have with Christ through personal communion.

Chapter One

ESTABLISHING
CATEGORICAL CONVICTIONS

“And when [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:8-14).

One thing that is so crucial to the stability, steadfastness, durability, and longevity of Christians, leaders, and ministries is living in divinely inspired convictions. The convictions God im-

parts to us are based upon His righteousness and His integrity. They are based upon His justice, His immutability, and His omniscience. They are rooted in the quality of His essence, the perfection of His character, and the nature of His divine provision for us.

So many Christians become casualties because they do not have *categorical convictions*. They may have convictions—even some good ones—but they do not think precisely with the mind of Christ, line upon line, precept upon precept, with convictions that are always under the Holy Spirit's prompting, checking, and guidance through the Word of God. Consequently, through rationalization, a believer may fall into acts of human depravity and operate in the instability of opinions that are outside of the conviction of the Lord Jesus Christ's inspired Word.

Growing in Convictions

First and foremost, all of us need to have a conviction of *who we are in Christ*. It must not be an opinion, but a conviction—an established fact, revealed and imparted by God's thoughts through His immutable righteousness, His divine integrity, and His perfect provision for man's condition. A conviction comes in the char-

acter of God's grace through the pipeline of love. It comes in the communication of His resurrection life, because we live as those who have been raised from the dead.

I make it a practice from time to time to write down specific personal convictions that God reveals to me in my communion with Him. Recently, I wrote down some more convictions for myself. It wasn't that I was living in folly, but I need to grow just like everyone else in convictions of precise light. "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Psalm 119:130). "In thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9*b*). The Hebrew word for "light" means accurate, precise light with no invasion of shadows. In light, we get more convictions.

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). God is life, and His life is light. There is no darkness that can overtake His light. The moment we don't have God's resurrection life, we don't have God's light. If there is a place in my life where I do not have resurrection life—because of self-preservation, ignorance, or self-deception in blindness—then I will not have God's light. I may think I do, but I do not. Conviction of truth has not yet invaded that room in my soul to give me God's provision for the de-

tails of my life so I can live in God's purpose.

It is imperative that we have convictions—convictions of loyalty, convictions of love, convictions of edification. We need to enter into silent prayer for people and then speak words of edification. Why? Because we have a *conviction* to do it.

We must grow in convictions through mercy, grace, love, and forgiveness, always hating sin and loving God. A Christian who doesn't grow in conviction is a casualty waiting to happen. He will become a statistic, indifferent toward his call as a member in particular in the Body of Christ.

It is a wonderful thing to live in convictions from a Finished Work premise as the basis for divine mobilization and spiritual motivation. Through communion in the Body, we can experience the practical application of the union we have with Christ.

Judge by Conviction, Not by Appearance

There is the story of a couple who loved the Lord dearly. God was blessing them with a season of material prosperity. One day, as they were getting ready to go to the mission field, God sent a messenger to them with two boxes. The boxes

were very different: one was trimmed with a setting of gold, the other did not have a very good appearance. In fact, it looked despicable.

The gift bearer asked the couple, "Which box would you like?" They chose the gold one, opened it, and found wood, hay, and stubble inside. He then opened the other box that looked so ugly on the outside, and it was filled with gold, silver, and precious stones.

The lesson here is that we must not judge according to appearance (John 7:24). The outside of the tabernacle in the wilderness was covered with ugly looking badger skins, but inside it was constructed with gold, silver, and precious stones. In the same way, there was no beauty in Jesus Christ's outward appearance that anyone would desire Him, but inside Him was gold, silver, and precious stones, revealing the value and quality of His inward life and character before God. This is the life we desire.

Chapter Two

LIVING TEMPLES OF GOD

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

In consideration of these verses, it is extremely serious when a Christian commits a sexual sin, whether it be adultery (a married person sinning against his partner), fornication (sexual sins of unmarried people), or homosexuality.

The body was not made for fornication. The mind must not become a sensual garbage collection of worldly lusts in the degeneration of human depravity. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. We need to present our bodies as living sacrifices because the expression of the libido waves, which produce distorted and perverted thoughts, can lead Christians into bondage.

I speak freely about sex; I always have and I always will. No one's opinions will ever stop me; I'm here because my mother and father had sexual relations. But we must have godly convictions to keep us from fulfilling natural desires outside of God's design.

We are God's temple, God's habitation. When a man penetrates a woman outside of holy wedlock, it is an invasion of the Holy of Holies. The word "penetration" might make you feel uncomfortable, but I use the word because it is accurate. A person who has sex outside of marriage is invading the Holy of Holies! Can you imagine someone having an affair or a one-night fling with a Christian? It's an invasion of God's Holy of Holies. It would be the same as going before the literal Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies of God's tabernacle and defiling it

through an abominable act of sin.

The Bible tells us that the body is not for fornication. We are God's temple. Our bodies are for the Lord and the Lord is for our bodies.

Marriage: Boundary for Intimate Communion

When a husband properly initiates to his wife in sex and she properly responds, they have the most intimate communion inside the Holy of Holies. When it is done without fantasy, without mental pornography, and without suggestiveness, then the husband and wife communicate in an act of the richest physical expression of a spiritual union. It is a godly communion affecting the spirit, soul, and body in the triple blessing of God's design to bring pleasure to this couple because they are one soul and one flesh.

A Christian's spirit, soul, and body represent the courts in the tabernacle. The body is the outer court; the soul is the middle court; and the human spirit is the Holy of Holies with the Blood on the Mercy Seat. If a woman who is a Christian allows a man to penetrate her outside of marriage, the man is invading the Holy of Holies and the woman is letting herself be defiled.

Because of so many wrong influences during the '60s and the '70s (the era of "free love"), be-

lievers today need healthy, godly convictions about sex within marriage. Ungodly lifestyles in the past have left many believers with damaged emotions and guilt. Men as well as women would have a much better self-image if they saw themselves as God's Holy of Holies, with the Mercy Seat inside.

In God's order, it is beautiful when the Mercy Seat provides sensual pleasure from a spiritual perspective. So, when a man is able to enter into a spiritual union with his wife, that union produces a sexual communion with the Holy of Holies—perfect oneness of their spirit, soul, and body. They are not bound by the world's standards in terms of frequency or duration of the act itself. But instead of merely gratifying a need, they are mobilized by God's love in the motivation of His life.

As a lamp is designed to release invisible electrical power, our bodies are designed to reveal the invisible power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our minds are designed to reveal divine thinking, or divine viewpoint. Our souls are designed to reveal the proper conscience and self-consciousness, positive volition and mental attitude, and proper emotional responses. The only reason we are on earth today is to reveal the very

essence and nature of God. That's why the Word of God says, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13).

First Corinthians is not an Old Testament book—it is a Finished Work epistle written under the inspiration of Holy Spirit in the post-Resurrection era. 1 Corinthians 7:1 says that a man must be very careful with a woman, regarding premarital relations. We shouldn't touch the temple of God outside of God's law of life. That would be flirting with a temptation to invade God's Holy of Holies through an immoral act.

Through premarital sex, two people become one flesh (1 Corinthians 6:15-16). If they get married, there will be problems because their relationship was based upon lust and fantasies that crossed over the line into mental perversion. So many Christian marriages lack fulfillment because they became one flesh and one soul through an invasion of the Holy of Holies outside of the perfect will of God.

But when a Spirit-filled husband and wife who are confessed up-to-date enter into the sexual act, they enter into the highest form of com-

munion for the whole man—spirit, soul, and body. God brings in pleasure for the physical senses through the mobilization of the soul and the motivation of the Spirit. They enter into a physical union that demonstrates the unity of the Trinity.

Living in the Design of God's Initiation

Don't ever forget this: We are not our own; we have been bought with a price; God is in us. When I use my tongue to manifest things that do not come from God's heart, I am revealing that there is no Finished Work sacrifice in my outer court, my body.

When I enter into depression, oppression, negative volition, or negative capacity in the details of life, I defile my soul by interacting with Adam in the experience of the Fall. If I refuse to receive grace in Christ consciousness, if I refuse to have a mental attitude of the Word of God, and if I refuse to allow my emotions to respond to God in the Holy of Holies, then I magnify my experience of Adam's Fall. Finally, through reiteration of the Fall, it becomes a part of my human construct.

How to be Released into Mercy

Because Jesus Christ satisfied the justice we deserved for our sins and iniquities, when the light of the Word of God comes by categories into my human spirit (God's Holy of Holies where the Mercy Seat resides), I pass beyond God's justice and receive His mercy. (Remember, while grace gives me what I don't deserve, mercy keeps back what I *do* deserve!) The Spirit enters into my Holy of Holies through the Word of God, and I live in the design of God's initiation.

In this new experience of resurrection life, God becomes the cause of His own effects, the communicator of His own life, the manifester of His own means, and the sanctifier of His Finished Work. Jesus Christ can then say of me, "This man has become a visible manifestation of My invisible characteristics." If I fail (and we all will), I can rebound immediately, and I won't condemn myself.

When a husband and wife learn how to love each other in Jesus Christ and how to be pure through the restraining power of God's love, mercy, and holiness, they enter into the highest form of tripartite union with their spirits, souls, and bodies communing with the Father, Son,

and Spirit. This allows them to become one soul as well as one flesh, attached to each other with a single eye and manifesting the oneness of the soul, the heart, and the spirit.

A couple that has one soul and one heart (Acts 4:32) experiences a type of sexual union in the promotion of God's divine power that brings in superseding consequences. Not only can there be a production of children—human souls who live forever as reproductions of His master creation—but this union also brings in a *family*, for God and for eternity. This is the great result of the sacredness of communion based upon a union where the three parts of man are not defiled.

Chapter Three

STANDING AGAINST
DEFILEMENT

In Numbers 25:6, "...One of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

In this passage, a couple came to the house of God to commit a sexual act. When Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the priest, saw it, he pursued them and "thrust both of them through" with a javelin. God praised him and rewarded him for having convictions. "...Behold, I give unto [Phinehas] my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (Numbers 25:12-13).

We need convictions, not preferences or

opinions. If I imitate Jesus Christ without having Jesus Christ's life, if I manifest the knowledge of God without the resurrection power of the indwelling Trinity, then I am trying to be a Christian without God. I am trying to be spiritual without the Spirit, and I am trying to be godly without God's resources to reproduce godliness. But 1 Thessalonians 5:24 says, "Faithful is *he* that calleth you, who also will do it."

Let us walk before God (Genesis 17:1) and let not fornication (sexual sins) be named one time among us (Ephesians 5:3). If Christians do these things, God ultimately will destroy their bodies (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). Why? To get them out of defilement, out of iniquity, and out of connections to the wrong resources, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Limiting Our Options

The same is true for our minds. Matthew 5:28, speaking of defilement in the mind, says that a man who even *thinks* of committing adultery has already committed adultery without even touching anyone. This is also true of anger (when it is not righteous indignation) and our tongues, when we do not speak redemptive words. Proverbs 10:20 tells us to have a silver

tongue that redeems through words of edification. We must have a love that thinks no evil and grace that prevails in every situation through an invisible communion with Jesus Christ.

It is so crucial that our spirit remain alive. In God's light, we see more light (Psalm 36:9). This means that out of the light that we receive today will come more precise convictions based upon God's divine integrity. God provides immutable divine resources in a Finished Work to redeem and restore through the impartation of His Word and Spirit in resurrection life.

I have made decisions about many things in my life. I have left myself no options. When I have dogmatic convictions that leave me no options, then I am no longer tempted. People who are tempted, except in isolated cases, have not resolved the issue of convictions. They may have limited convictions, but not complete convictions. Without complete convictions, they are tempted and often fall, in weakness and frailty, into the causes and effects of Adamic habits.

When something comes up, it's a beautiful thing to look the tempter in the face and confess, "I have no feelings and no temptation, so go take your program elsewhere!"

I have convictions to think purely, to love

purely, to forgive, to show mercy, to give grace, to hate sin, and to love righteousness. I have a conviction to finish the course and keep the faith. I have a conviction to fight the good fight of faith, to study and meditate on the Word of God daily. I have a conviction to pray, to win souls, to be faithful to a local assembly. I have a conviction to be faithful to a local pastor-teacher as he follows God. I have a conviction to edify with my tongue and to communicate the whole counsel of God. I exercise my volitional right in the privilege of receiving divine convictions through growing in categories of truth. These are not opinions or religious rites to observe—they are convictions.

Many people want to have a Christianity that requires no personal accountability and no personal obligation to a Cross, and that's why they feel condemned by convictions rather than converted by them.

First I realize that I have an obligation to the absolute truth of the Cross and that the Cross requires my death in positional identification daily. Then, the fact of my death, burial, resurrection, and ascension with Christ becomes conviction. It is no longer an option—it becomes a privilege, a provision, and the truth becomes my

possession.

Conviction Not Condemnation

“And when [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove [(convict)] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11).

Subjectivity takes away from convictions. Needs of the flesh weaken convictions. Instead of waiting on God to provide, insecurity and wanting something “now” takes the place of convictions. Past patterns of self-destruction produce future destructive patterns that take away from our convictions.

Because the Holy Spirit works in the realm of God’s mercy, in the theater of God’s grace, and in the operation of God’s Word, He will always convict and never condemn, but He will *always* convict of sin. He won’t accept our opinions, rationalizations, or human deductions that prevent us from making decisions to depart from sin. The Spirit convicts of sin.

Then, the Holy Spirit convicts of righteousness, meaning we can receive categorical con-

victions through imparted righteousness that relate to the categories of God's character, His essence and attributes. We can apply those convictions in any given detail of life.

Furthermore, the Spirit convicts that Satan has already been judged. We live a Christian life with our enemy having been defeated and frustrated by the judgment of Jesus Christ's death. Moreover, after His resurrection, the demons of hell could not stop His ascension.

Our enemy? My conviction is that he has been defeated. He has been judged. Why flirt with him? There is no reason to accept his deception. Why bargain with him for profit today in the temporal value system? Have convictions and do not allow that option.

Entering at the Strait Gate

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way" tells me the way is so narrow that all options are gone. For me to live is Christ. For me to live is

every Word of God, using rebound instantly when I fail. For me to live is the sanctification of the Word and the Spirit (John 17:17; 1 Peter 1:2). I don't have options to weigh. I am a man of God with convictions; my wife is a woman of God with convictions. No longer do I have to be tempted by options. I have divine convictions and divine resources to honor those convictions.

Every problem we have relates to some provision we rejected because we lacked conviction. Every dilemma we face is because of an area that hasn't been established in godly convictions. We need to have convictions that place us into the reality of divine activity, releasing the invisible God through our visible humanity. Convictions bring us into our design and purpose for eternity, for which we were created and redeemed by God.

Chapter Four

AVOIDING SENTIMENTALITY

With sentimentality abounding in the Christian community today, Philippians 1:9-11 tells us how to be free of this in our relationships: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in *knowledge* and in all *judgment*; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”

The key words here, “knowledge” and “judgment,” refer to doctrine. This verse speaks of using doctrine to judge how you handle love and to control how we communicate love. This doctrine is crucial because it deals with people who compromise in their relationships. These people are filled with sentimentality, which may be defined as substituting compromise for transparency. It stems from a fear of rejection. Senti-

mentality is a soul-power rapport (or appreciation) that is rooted in the needs of Adam, living in emotions in a subjective relationship. It appeals to sentiment and is swayed by sentiment toward someone else.

Sentimentality bypasses a daily cross and repudiates Jesus' prayer in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." He meant "Set them apart in My Word." But sentimentality resists living by every Word of God. Instead, a sentimental Christian develops relationships in the flesh to satisfy his emptiness because the Word of God is not dwelling richly in his heart with the fellowship of the Spirit. Relationships based on fellowship in the Spirit include praying together, soul-winning together, studying the Bible together, and just talking about the Word together.

The Sword That Divides

"Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it"

(Luke 8:19-21).

Some families really hate this verse. I am all for the sacredness of the family. I visit my family. I stay in contact with my brothers. We encourage Bible college students to write home to their moms and dads regularly. Saved or unsaved, they should be called and visited. Family is sacred. Honor your family. But do it biblically.

Notice, in Luke 8, that Jesus' mother and brothers wanted to see Him. What did He do? He got into a boat with His disciples (see Luke 8:22). Some scholars say this happened the very same day. Jesus said, "Come on, we've got to take a trip in a boat." This is the same Jesus who said, "Honor thy father and thy mother." He did honor His family, but He still had to be about His Father's business (see Luke 2:49).

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law" (Luke 12:51-53).

Jesus refused to be sentimental. Are you sentimental? Will you lose your call because of sentimentality? Stand up for Jesus in your call. Was it a man who called you, or was it Jesus Christ? It was Jesus who called you, so refuse sentimentality.

Again, sentimentality is substituting compromise for transparency in the light. It is fear of rejection; living to fulfill Adam's need and having a soul-power rapport instead of fellowship in the light with Christians.

If a Christian's ministry to an unsaved person lacks confrontation, then he is reinforcing that unsaved person on the road to hell. This kind of sentimental ministry bypasses the Cross so no one will be offended. But One is being offended—the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). Heaven and hell are the issues here. We are loving, we are kind. To the best of our ability, we must lay down our lives. Yet, we must not compromise.

An Identity Derived from the Cross

We must stand firm in an identity that is derived from the Cross. An identity derived from the Cross is never sentimental; it does not com-

promise.

Read what the apostle John wrote pertaining to Christians:

“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth [divine] good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (3 John 9-11).

I cannot follow after someone who is not of God because of sentimentality. I may visit, call, and show kindness. I can be there for him if he has a need. Though Diotrophes was a professing elder—an elder!—the apostle John called him “evil.”

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed”

(2 John 9-10).

I have seen so much sentimentality among Christians. What does the Bible say to do with divisive people? “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). If you keep associating with them, you reinforce their position. If you can be around them and take advantage of opportunities to get into spiritual things and finally confront them in love, then you are making it possible for them to be accountable to be saved. But if they will not look at Calvary, our lives must be a cross to them. Oswald Chambers said, “Christians have to become a cross for people who refuse it.” Sadly, there are Christians who are more comfortable around unsaved people than they are with saved people because they are not hungry and thirsty for the Word of God.

We performed a beautiful wedding recently, and the groom gave a great testimony that didn't go over too well with some friends and family in attendance. We should always be kind and be careful to expose our unsaved loved ones to God's love. We love them, invite them, and do everything we can to show them we care. But

beyond all that, at this wedding, family members heard the Gospel. Those who came and did not get saved will face God one day and He will bring back to their remembrance the words spoken at that wedding.

Mark Them

Some said of Paul that he sent letters to “terrify” (see 2 Corinthians 10:9). Do you think he was being unkind? Do you think he was trying to manipulate them by fear? All Scripture is inspired by God, and the Holy Spirit inspired the words Paul wrote. He said to mark the people you should be around as well as those you should not.

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly [meaning emotions], and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to

the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:17-21).

Paul wept for the enemies of the Cross, but he still said that they are to be marked. Why? Because true love cannot be sentimental, nor can it compromise.

We need to have convictions that make us stand against evil conversation. Even our young people have to learn how to mark those who would cause division. We don't mark them over differences. But if they are sowing discord, if they are worldly and trying to bring in Satan's life, they must be marked.

Though you don't run these people down behind their backs, you do need to mark them. Otherwise, the serpent's eggs that are in them can get into your head and those eggs are bound to hatch someday (see Isaiah 59:1-5). They may not hatch this year or next year, but they will hatch, possibly within a couple months. The eggs can be transferred into your subconscious mind, even if you disagree with them. Just by listening to the subtle negativity of another, you open yourself up to infection. Be careful what you hear and how you hear (Mark 4:24; Luke 8:18).*

Learn to practice Ephesians 5:11: "And have

no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” We mark them and avoid them unless there’s a way to minister to them. It doesn’t mean we preach up a storm at them. We need to be so careful and wise in our ministry.

Standing Firm in the Call

I have to abide in my calling—not in what someone wants me to do for my calling. I must abide in *my* calling. Did God tell me to come to Bible college? If the answer is yes, then should I let anyone take away that calling? No. That would be sentimentality and compromise.

Abide in the calling wherein you are called. A call means that you are separated unto categories of eternal life as your vocation. God can make divine arrangements around your call so that you don’t have to leave it. If the Word abides in you, and you abide in the Word (John 15:7), then your needs will be fulfilled so you can honor your call.

Let your speech be seasoned with the life of Christ and have compassion. Don’t fear division. The division is already there. And don’t wait until there is a funeral to speak the Gospel. Speak the truth in love while the lost can still be

saved.

Love According to Knowledge

Was God sentimental in dealing with Miriam when she expressed her dislike for the woman Moses married? No, He gave her leprosy and for seven days she was shut out of the camp of Israel because she didn't like it that her brother married an Ethiopian woman. I don't know if God would have healed her and let her back in if Moses hadn't interceded (see Numbers 12:1-15).

Sentimentality incapacitates a Christian. You find it in the workplace, you see it in relationships. The Bible says the answer is to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). And we should let our speech be seasoned with salt, which speaks of the dynamics of light and life from God's Word. Certainly, I am to love my enemies, but that doesn't mean I call them up and go out to dinner with them (1 Corinthians 5:11). I weep and pray for them. And if they need me, I will be there with no thought of retaliation.

Love must be according to knowledge. I must love according to doctrine, and doctrine must be the means of judging a situation in the Spirit. We approve things that are excellent, but we do not approve the things that are not, for

we are to be pure and “without offense till the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:10).

**Read Living an Inspired Life from the Breath of God by Pastor Stevens, Grace Publications, 1997.*

CONCLUSION

It is so crucial for a Christian to understand this doctrine thoroughly. If my life glorifies God, then it will cause division—even if I'm kind, gracious, and careful in wisdom. My life will be a sword to some in my household. Every now and then, a precious man will come home with carnal moods and his wife will have to stand up for truth. Her life might make him angry, but she cannot be sentimental. A parent deals with a teenager, talking to him and guiding him the best he can. But influence from a peer or from a carnal family member stirs rebellion that cannot be covered up. The parent's standards bring division.

This message is not legalistic, it is realistic. This is God's revealed declaration of truth to protect us, to provide for us, to keep us from the consequences of sin, to keep us in harmony with the Trinity, and to keep our body, soul, and spirit healthy and prosperous in the riches of God's

grace. This message is pure, without compromising an individual's right to choose negative toward divine mandates—and that includes accepting God's consequences.

Whatever decisions we make, choose to glorify Christ. We were created to bring pleasure to Him and to Him alone. He will add the things that we need. He will make things happen if we will stand firm and obey Him.