Grace to You :: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time

The Christian's Duty in a Hostile World, Part 3

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:10-11

Code: 60-43

Let's open our Bibles tonight for our study of the Word of God to 1 Peter chapter 4...1 Peter chapter 4. And again we're looking at verses 7 through 11, let me read them to you. Beginning in verse 7, Peter writes, "The end of all things is at hand. Therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer; above all keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies so that in all things God made be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever, amen."

Now we have noted on the last couple of Sunday nights that this is a rich summary of our responsibility as Christians. We have called it, "Christian duty in a hostile world." It reminds us of something that is very basic to the Christian faith. It reminds us that faith cannot be removed or detached from the realm of real life. Let me say that again. Faith cannot be removed or detached from the realm of real life.

To put it another way, salvation is not just forgiveness for sins. Salvation is a new order of life. I say that because it seems to me that in the contemporary climate in which the church exists today, salvation is primarily, if not exclusively, conceived of as somewhat far removed from its biblical definition. Salvation today primarily means the forgiveness of sins, to most people. And I'm afraid to many preachers. They talk so much about salvation being the point at which your sins are forgiven, you're delivered from sin and death and guilt and hell. But when we understand salvation in a biblical way, we must understand that salvation effects a whole transformation of life. It is not just the forgiveness of sins, it is the transformation of life.

The emphasis today tends to be on viewing salvation as receiving the forgiveness of sins by faith in Christ. That, of course, is true. But most salvation preaching seems to center only on that and even to consummate only on that and so the cross becomes the focal point. The cross is that point at which Christ bears our sins and seems then to be the focal point of salvation because it is there that the sinner finds grace for the forgiveness of his sins.

You might be interested to know that as central as the cross is in Christianity, it was not really the central focus of the early church. The early church saw much more in salvation than just the moment

at which Christ atoned for sins, the moment in which He died on the cross. The early church saw salvation in much broader terms than that. The early church saw salvation as something that only began with the forgiveness of sins and led to a life transformed into obedience and consummated in the glory with Jesus Christ. It is interesting that even history sort of reflects this. In his book, Civilization, author Kenneth Clark shows that the cross as such was a very late symbol in Christian art and Christian culture. When we think about Christianity, we think immediately about the cross as the symbol of our faith. You might be interested to know that as far as that book, Civilization, determined the first appearance of the cross in Christian art or culture occurred in A.D. 430, all the way into the fifth century, on the doors of the church at Santa Sobina(?) and that that cross was a very small little cross inset into some piece of Christian art.

The early church did not focus on the cross. The early church focused on what great event? The resurrection. It focused its attention on the resurrection. And consequently its preoccupation was not with the point at which sin is forgiven, but the point at which new life begins. And the resurrection is that point. We, of course, died in Christ spiritually and in that death the penalty of sin was paid. But we also arose in Christ, says Paul, to walk in newness of life. To be saved then to the early church, and surely to us as well, was not just to have your sin forgiven. It was not just some transaction which dealt with your guilt. But rather to be saved was to be delivered from the power of darkness and to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. In other words, it was to enter in to an entirely new kind of life, to enter into a new sphere of existence. Salvation is not just atonement. Salvation is not just forgiveness. Salvation is regeneration. It is the imparting of a new kind of life, the life of God in the soul of man.

And because that is true, one who is saved not only has sin dealt with but has a new desire to live in that new sphere. That desire rises from a new nature, a holy seed. The New Testament talks a lot about the fact that there is planted in the believer the seed of new life, an incorruptible seed. And that seed is a very important concept because a seed is that which produces something. And the very fact that Scripture identifies the Christian as one in whom is planted an incorruptible seed of life indicates that there will be a fruit bearing, there will be a production out of that seed. That seed of new life that is incorruptible will flourish. And so, when a person is saved, it is not just a matter of dealing with sin, it turns them from the old life and the old ways to a new life and new ways that are the very consequential expression of that new life.

To put it simply, works, godly works, spiritual works, good works become the inevitable result of that transformation. James says they are inherent in the nature of saving faith. Where you have saving faith you have works because salvation is not just forgiveness, it is transformation, it is regeneration.

Martin Luther describes saving faith as a powerful life altering force. Listen the words of Martin Luther. "O this faith is a living busy active powerful thing. It is impossible that it should not be ceaselessly doing that which is good. It does not even ask whether good works should be done, but

before the question can be asked it has done them. And it is constantly engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works is a man without faith. He gropes and casts about him to find faith and good works, not knowing what either of them is and yet prattles and idly multiplies words about faith and good works."

Further he says, "Faith is a living wellfounded confidence in the grace of God, so perfectly certain that it would die a thousand times rather than surrender its conviction. Such confidence and personal knowledge of divine grace makes it possessor joyful, bold, full of warm affection toward God and all created things, all of which the Holy Spirit works in faith. Hence, such a man becomes without constraint willing and eager to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer all manner of ills in order to please and glorify God who has shown toward him such grace," end quote.

Many theologians have tried to make us believe that Luther didn't believe in such a faith, but he did as witnessed by his own words. His view of salvation was right. And ours must be as well. We must see salvation as a transformation of life, listen to it now, that makes meaningful and desirable all the commandments of the Word of God. That's why in the great commission it says, "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." There is inherent in that new life the impulse to obey.

So, here we are. Forgiven...yes. Transformed...yes. With an impulse to obey and here we have that impulse to obey served by a series of commands in this text. These texts then come, like many others in the New Testament, to speak to the heart where obedience is the deepest desire. Peter then is instructing us on the principles of Christian living. We do not fight it. We desire it. We do not resist it. We long for it. We do not debate it. We obey it. That is the mark of transformation.

In verse 7, you remember, he gave us first of all the incentive when he said, "The end of all things is at hand," and was talking about the consummation or the return of Jesus Christ. He said keep in mind that Christ could come at any moment, we live in constant expectancy of His return. The fact that the end of all things is near should keep us accountable for when He comes we will stand before His judgment seat and our works will be evaluated whether their gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble. And we will be rewarded eternally on the basis of our faithfulness. So we live in the light of the return of Christ and we looked at that quite carefully.

Then from the incentive came immediately in verse 7 the instructions. And here are the commands that I believe come to an eager transformed heart. The commands in verses 7 and following, down through the middle of verse 11, basically fall into three categories. I gave them to you last time. Category number one, holiness...has to do with your relationship to God. Category number two, love...has to do with your relationship to others. And now we come to category number three, service...service. In verse 7 Peter was talking about having sound judgment and a sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. In other words, having a holy life which enhances your communion with the living

God. That is basic to Christian living. And then in verses 8 and 9 he spoke about love, fervent love, the love that covers the sins of others, the love that is hospitable to strangers and never begrudges it.

But now as we come to verses 10 and 11 we're going to talk about service. And I'm going to try to condense a whole large subject which by the way I have written a very thick book about called Spiritual Gifts. But I want to condense it in just a few moments that we have before us tonight because these two verses talk about service. We are one, to maintain a holy relationship with God. Two, to maintain a loving relationship with others. Three, to live a life of service. Simply that.

How then is that service to be rendered. Let's simplify it as much as we possibly can. Look at verse 10 and 11. "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." Now that's where we start. Peter says you're to be busy serving one another. You start with a right vertical relationship. You follow up with a right horizontal relationship and that engages you into a life of effective service. Inward holiness leads to outward love which produces spiritual service. And spiritual service without inward holiness and spiritual service without outward love is hypocrisy, legalism, sham.

Now let's look then at these two verses that tell us about spiritual service. Verse 10 says we are to be serving. We are to be serving. But how is the question? How am I to serve? The word "serve" is a very very mundane word, I might remind you, very mundane word. It means literally to wait on people. That's what it means. To wait on people. It is the word <u>diakoneo</u>which is used of a table waiter, worse than that a busboy. Very menial task. We are to give our lives to serve one another. Now the question is how are we to do that and we're going to see it one element at a time.

Verse 10 again, "As each one has received a special gift." Humm...here is the tool for service. We are to serve one another through the means of a special gift...a special gift. Now what do we mean by a gift? What is this gift that he's talking about? Well, we're going to see that in just a few moments. Before we look at that let's go back in the text and take one piece at a time that deals with this special gift. First of all, I want to talk about the extent of these special gifts, verse 10, "As each one has received a special gift." There's the extent. Each Christian has a special gift. Everyone does, you do, I do, every Christian does. Peter says, "As each one has received," and therein does he describe for us the extent of special gifts, or as we call them spiritual gifts. Everybody has one.

Turn with me for the moment to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and I want to reinforce this point by showing you explicitly what the Spirit of God says. First Corinthians chapter 12 talks about the same subject, it's talking about spiritual gifts. Verse 1 says, "Now concerning spiritual gifts." Verse 4 says there are varieties of gifts. But verse 7 says, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." In other words, every believer has a Spiritgiven spiritual gift. Verse 11, "But one and the same Spirit, Holy Spirit, works all these things...listen now...distributing to each one individually just as He wills." Notice verse 12, "For even as the body, the body of Christ, like a physical body is

one and yet has many members and all the members of the body though they are many are one body, so also is Christ." The point is as you have a body and every member has a certain function, so in the body of Christ every member has a certain function. And the body, says verse 14, is not one member but many. And the idea there is so is the church.

Now verse 11 of 1 Corinthians 12 says that the Spirit is distributing...distributing to each one. That is universality. But He is distributing to each one individually, that is individuality. So you have universality and individuality. What do you mean by that? I simply mean this, He gives gifts to every single Christian but while we are universally gifted, we are individually gifted as well which means that each of our gifts is unique to us. He distributes to each one, that's universality; individually, that's individuality. And by the way, the word individuality is idiosfrom which we get idiot. What does an idiot mean? That is a Greek word that means peculiar, it means there's nobody like him. And it came to be used of people who are mentally incompetent because they are so odd, they're so peculiar, there's nobody like them.

The point is this, I believe that every Christian is a spiritual snowflake. Just like you are literally the only one of your kind, even if you're a twin you're different than your twin. Your fingerprints are different, your teeth are different, and other parts of you are different. Every one of us stamped with absolute uniqueness, we are all creative idiots, in that sense. We are peculiar, we are unique. There's no one like us. We are spiritual snowflakes. And I believe that when the Spirit of God gives to every believer gifts, He gives them individually to each believer absolutely peculiar to that believer.

You say, "Well now wait a minute, John. If I read in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 I read that there are just a few gifts listed there. I mean, a few specific ones. It talks about, for example, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, working of miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, various kinds of tongues, interpretation. And then if you look at Romans chapter 12 you have another list of gifts and you look there and there are just a few suggested there. For example in Romans 12 you have prophecy, service, exhortation, giving, leading, showing mercy." You say, "Well, you know, there's only about a dozen of them listed here. How you going to divide a dozen gifts up among millions of Christians and make them all different?"

Let me tell you how. I believe you have a list of gifts in Romans 12, a list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. The fact that they are different shows how much latitude there is in their definition. Paul lists some in the Roman passage, he lists some in the Corinthian passage and there is some duplication and some nonduplication. And it's almost as if he's just suggesting broad categories. The best way to understand it would be that they're like colors on a palette and each gift would be a color and as God takes His brush and paints you, He dips into different color categories and paints you a unique color. You're not the same as someone else. Even if you had fifteen people or twenty or five thousand who all had a gift of teaching, you could have them all teach and they would all teach differently, uniquely. Why? Well because the category of gift is just that, it's a category into which God dips, as it were,

and then again maybe dipping into those other categories to make you unique.

And then there's more than that. Ephesians 4:7 says the measure of Christ's gift. He uses that phrase, "the measure of Christ's gift." He measures out that gift in different ways. You might have a gift of teaching, of gift of showing mercy, a gift of service, a gift of faith or whatever, but the measure by with which you are given that gift might vary. We have many people in this church with the gift of teaching but it's different in each case. So you have the measure of the gift.

Not only that, in Romans 12:3 Paul says when God gives the gift He also gives the measure of faith to operate that gift. So you have your gift measured out and then you have the right amount of faith to operate that gift measured out. A measure of grace, a measure of faith is linked with the measured gift for effective use. And so while all of us have gifts, the Lord is making us very unique. That passage in 1 Corinthians 12 emphasizes this same point from another vantage point. He says there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit. There are varieties of ministries in which those gifts are used but the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects that result from those gifts being used. So you have varieties of gifts, varieties of ministries in which the gifts operate, varieties of effects because you have varieties of grace, if you will, measured out, varieties of faith measured out. Everyone of us comes out as a spiritual snowflake.

People say to me, "What's your spiritual gift?" Well I can't label it and say preaching or teaching. My spiritual gift is that which I do to serve Christ. It's a composite of a number of things. Obviously it would include preaching and teaching and would include perhaps exhortation. Your gift may be a combination of other things but it's you who are absolutely unique. Even Timothy who did so many things, who preached and taught, who did the work of an evangelist, who counseled and exhorted, who had to demonstrate leadership again and again in his life, he had all of those capabilities rolled into one thing but when his gift was addressed it was addressed as if he only had one gift...the gift that was given to you do not neglect, it says in 1 Timothy 4:14. He received the gift.

So you have a special gift. It's a combination of the colors, as it were, on the palette of giftedness that come together to make you unique and there's nobody like you, absolutely no one like you.

So, first of all then, the extent of spiritual gifts, everybody has them and you've got one that nobody else has. So you take that unique gift in a unique ministry with a unique effect with a measured amount of grace and a measured amount of faith and then you add your physical capabilities, your training, your background, your opportunities, your environment and all your influences and you function like nobody else...nobody else. That's why there's nobody to replace you if you don't function. That's the extent of spiritual gifts.

Secondly, what about the source of spiritual gifts? Where do they come from? What about the source? Well we've already certainly hinted at it, look again at verse 10. It says, "As each one has

received a special gift." You've received it, somebody gave it to you. You didn't earn it, you didn't pray for it, you didn't plead for it, you didn't work it up, you didn't generate it, you received it. Ephesians 4:7 calls it Christ's gift. The word for gift here is charisma, that's the word from which we get grace. It is a gift of grace, you didn't earn it, you couldn't earn it. By the way, in Ephesians 4:7 when it talks about Christ's gift, it uses the word dorea and that word dorea emphasizes the freeness of the gift.

Sometimes spiritual gifts are from the word <u>pneumatikos</u>which means spiritual. That's talking about the character of the gift, it's a spiritual capacity. <u>Doreais</u> talking about the freeness of that gift. And so freely we have received our spiritual gift. It is a gift of grace, a spiritual enablement. It is supernaturally given, it is supernaturally energized. You can't earn it. You can't work it up. You can't pursue it. That's what's so foolish about people pursuing certain spiritual gifts. You can't do that, they are received, not pursued.

Let me show you that again. Turn back to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 4, "There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit. There are varieties of ministries and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects but the same God who works all things in all persons." Now listen to me, folks. It says the Spirit gives the gift, the Lord gives the ministry and God works the effects. That's the trinity...that's the trinity. They're all involved. You receive those gifts, you don't earn them. Verse 7 says, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit." You didn't earn it, it was given to you. Verse 11, we read it before, "The same Spirit works all these things and He distributes to each one individually just as He wills." Just as He wills, just as He desired. You see that? Just as He desired.

Now somebody says, "Well look at verse 31. It says there earnestly desire the greater gifts." Boy, has that verse confused people. It says right there you're supposed to desire the greater gifts. Listen to me carefully. There are two ways to interpret that verse, two ways. The first way is this, you as a congregation when you meet together should be desiring the greater gifts to be exercised. Did you hear that? Not talking about an individual desiring a gift, he is saying when the church comes together for its worship it is to desire the greater gifts. And what was the greatest gift? According to chapter 14? It says in verse 1 of chapter 14, "Pursue love, desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." Same idea. When the church comes together, you shouldn't be desiring these ecstatic things, you should be desiring the greater gifts, the gifts that bring to you the Word of God. That's his point.

So he's talking collectively, that's one way to interpret it. He's talking collectively and saying when you come as a church together you should be desiring that the greater gifts be exercised instead of these lesser minor gifts that your exercising and counterfeiting and abusing.

But there's another way to translate this also. You see it as an imperative, like a command, earnestly desire the greater gifts. It could be strictly an indicative. In other words, a statement of fact. It could read this way, "You are strongly desiring the showy gifts." You can translate greater that way. You're coveting the showy gifts. He could be saying that. It would be the same construction exactly. You are desiring or you are coveting the showy gifts but I show you a still more excellent way. There's something far better than that. But in either case it is directed at the congregation to tell them to pursue the right gifts or to stop pursuing the wrong gifts in the exercise of their assembly together. It is not telling an individual Christian to pursue a certain gift, that would be contrary to everything else in this chapter. Gifts can't be sought...they can't be sought.

All right, so we see the extent of gifts, all believers have them. The source of gifts, they are given by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, the nature of gifts. The nature of your spiritual gift is indicated back in 1 Peter chapter 4 by the word "gift," the word "gift." And we've already basically touched on this. The word is charisma. Our spiritual gift is a gift of grace. It is undeserved. It us unearned. It is free. It is given to us by God's Holy Spirit. As I mentioned doreaemphasizes in Ephesians 4:7 the freeness of the gift and this term shows the motive behind that free gift, namely God's grace. The word pneumatikon also translated spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians means spirituals and emphasizes the character of those gifts. That is they're controlled by the Holy Spirit. Now keep listening to me, I'm going to pull this all together.

So what is the nature of our gift? It is motivated by the grace of God, given sovereignly and freely to every believer and controlled by the Holy Spirit. It is <u>charisma</u>, motivated by grace. It is <u>dorea</u>, freely given. It is <u>pneumatikos</u>, spiritual in the sense that it is operated by the Holy Spirit. And you will find that term <u>pneumatikon</u>used in 1 Corinthians 12:1, 1 Corinthians 14:1 and then a number of other places in the fourteenth chapter as well to refer to spiritual gifts.

So then summing it up, what is a spiritual gift? It is a graciously freely given mode of ministry energized by the Holy Spirit. Did you get that? It is a graciously given free and supernatural spiritual capacity for ministry to the body of Christ. A spiritual gift is a Godgiven capacity through which the Holy Spirit supernaturally uses you to minister to the body. That's it. I have a spiritual gift, I use it to minister to you. You have a spiritual gift, you use it to minister to me. It was given you graciously freely by God, it is energized by the Holy Spirit and through it you minister to the body. We're not talking about human talent here, we're talking about divine enablement. Your spiritual gift is a unique capacity to minister to the body of Christ as the Spirit of God flows through you.

Now, Peter says, first of all take care of the vertical relationship and be holy in your life. Secondly, take care of the horizontal relationship, be loving in your relationships. And now thirdly he says serve, serve, serve. And the thing by which you serve is this vehicle God has given you called a spiritual gift.

Now let me give you another thought about it. Not only the extent of it and the source of it, and the inherent nature of it, but let me talk about the obligation of it. Look back to our verse, verse 10, "As each one has received a special gift, use it in serving one another." Now there's the obligation. Use it. First Corinthians 12:7 says you were given a gift for the common good...for the common good. You are to use it to be mutually beneficial to the church, to help, to benefit. You cannot cease to use it without it having an adverse effect on the church.

Go back to 1 Corinthians 12 for a moment and let me show you this. First Corinthians 12 and I want you to just flow through this so you'll really understand this. First Corinthians 12:12, and he's comparing you and your spiritual gifts in the body of Christ with a human body as an analogy. So he says a body is one, it has many members. And all the members of the body though they are many are one body, so also is Christ. He says look at your human body. You've got one body but a lot of functions and a lot of members. Okay, that's like the body of Christ. Verse 14 says the body is not one member but many. Now what's going to happen here in verse 15 if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body? Is it not for this reason any the less a part of the body?" You feet can't go around saying well because I'm not a hand I'm not going to serve. Or, "If the whole body," verse 17, "were an eye, where would the hearing be?" Everybody's got a different function. "And if the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? Now God has placed the members, each one of them in the body as He desired and if they were all one member where would the body be?" It would be a freak. "But now there are many members but one body and the eye can't say to the hand, I have no need of you, or again the head can't say to the feet, I have no need of you." On the contrary. "It is much truer that the members of the body which seemed to be weaker are necessary."

In other words, that you may be proud about your nose and the beauty of your nose, you're better off without your nose than you are without your liver. And what might seem the less comely might be the most important. Sometimes we depreciate some members of the body of Christ in the wrong way.

So, look at verse 23. "Those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor and are unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, where as our seemly members have no need of it but God has so composed the body giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked that there should be no division in the body but that the members should have the same care for one another." In other words, you've got to understand that everybody is equally important. Before the time of cosmetic surgery, you didn't do things to make sure your ears were the way you wanted them. You didn't do things to make sure your nose was the way you wanted it. You didn't do things to make sure the way your hands were the way you wanted it, you did things to make sure the stuff nobody sees was working. And you had surgery to fix something inside because that was more important to you than on the outside. It's nice to be nice on the outside but what does it matter with what you look like if you're diseased on the inside?

The point is this, those members which are the most visible and the most entertaining and the most prolific are not necessarily the most important. So you can't underestimate anyone's significance. You use your gift. You can't say, "Well I'm not going to serve because I'm not a hand." "I'm not going to serve because I'm not an ear." You can't do that. You have an obligation to use your spiritual gift. Beloved, if you don't, you're in disobedience to the Word of God and you're running crossgrain to regeneration because you were saved to serve.

Furthermore, would you notice again in verse 10 that he adds a little strengthening word for us? "We are to employ it as good stewards." There we are to that word <u>oikonomos</u>again. We are responsible for managing our gift. Just like we said this morning, we're responsible for managing the Lord's money. We are responsible like a steward was. A steward handled people's land and their funds and their resources, their human resources and their food stuffs, paid wages, took care of the members of the household. They managed all of that for the owner. And that's what it is with us in the spiritual gifts category. God has given these gifts for us to manage. You don't own your gift, you're under obligation to use your gift.

Now don't get overly technical trying to describe what it is or refine it and define it. I know there have been all kinds of computer studies that will tell you your gift. You fill out two sheets and they'll send you back a little paper that tells you your gift. No. No, it cannot be analyzed by a computer. Your gift is what you do when you're filled with the Spirit of God to serve the body of Christ which produces a positive impact. That's your gift. And if you try to get me to totally identify mine, I can't do it. I just know the Spirit of God uses me when I'm available to be used. Now no gift is for you, your gift isn't for you, my gift isn't for me. I don't preach to listen to my own tapes. That's not for me. It's for you. And you don't serve, you don't serve for you, you serve for me. We serve each other for the common good.

Now another thought. Peter speaks also of the variety of spiritual gifts..the variety of spiritual gifts. Would you please note at the end of verse 10 he says we are to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God...the manifold grace of God. Well that word means multicolored and it reminds us again of 1 Corinthians 12:4 to 6 where 1 Corinthians 12 he says there are varieties of gifts, there are varieties of ministries, there are varieties of effects. Literally it means distributions. So God gives these gifts and He gives these ministries and He gives these effects in all kinds of varieties, manifold, multicolored giftedness. And I love that word multicolored because that takes me back to the palette again. God has these colors and He blends them to paint you a unique color. So you and I may have both have the gift of teaching but mine may be blended with a unique grace, a unique measure of faith, mine may be blended into a special ministry with a special Holy Spirit energized effect. Great diversity in the body of Christ. I may preach but with an emphasis on showing mercy. I may preach with an emphasis on discerning truth. It varies from person to person. That is why nonuse is so crucial because nobody can take your place...nobody can take your place.

Beloved, there are a lot of issues that are important in the church, none is more important than this and none is more serious than this. If you disdain to use your gift, you cripple the body of Christ, you cripple it, you turn it into a crippled body which does not rightly represent Christ. I used to call the church body number two...body number one was Christ incarnate, body number two is Christ living in His church. And if we do not function as the body, then Christ is crippled and the world's perspective of Him is skewed.

Now we have these gifts but there is an assumption in Peter's commands here and that is that we're not all using them properly. We can use them improperly in the flesh, counterfeiting them. We can let them fall into disuse. And so in either case we are disobedient so Peter says, "You have received the gift, use it."

And then in verse 11 he shows us that our gifts fall into two general categories...two general categories. Very simple. "Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies." Stop at that point. Two kinds of gifts...speaking gifts, serving gifts. That's it. You either have been given a speaking gift or a serving gift. Some of us have been given a gift which involves speaking, preaching, teaching, giving word of wisdom, giving a word of knowledge, discernment, leadership. Some have been given serving gifts, the gift of service, maybe the gift of administration, the gift of prayer which is a quiet silent behind the scenes, showing mercy, the gift of helps. And all of those beautiful blends, those are the serving gifts.

If you have a gift of speaking, he says in verse 11, make sure when you speak you speak the utterances of God. If you have the gift of prophecy or teaching or knowledge or wisdom or exhortation, when you open your mouth make sure you speak, as it were, the utterance of God. Now let me say a word about that. That term is used of Scripture. It refers to the Old Testament. It is so used in Acts 7:38 and in Romans 3:2. Whenever you use a speaking gift, you must speak God's truth, not your own ideas. You must speak the word that God uttered, the utterance of God.

Since not all Christians were inspired by God like the writers of the New Testament, since not all Christians were inspired by God, Peter must be referring here to the revealed Word, the written Word. And he is simply saying if you have a speaking gift, whenever you speak and you use that gift, it better be the Word of God. That is a very very strong statement.

Secondly, if you have a serving gift, then you do that by the strength which God supplies. If you have a gift of helps or a gift in the area of administration or giving or mercy, gift of discerning, some function of serving the body of Christ, then you better do that by the strength which God supplies. You better be energized by the Holy Spirit, walking in the Spirit, Spirit filled so that you're not doing it in the flesh.

So, Peter gives us here full instruction on spiritual gifts. The extent...everybody's got them, but individually they are unique. The source...they come from God, they can't be sought, they're given by grace as a free gift from God's sovereignty. The nature of gifts...they are spiritual enablements through which the Spirit uses you to minister to the body. The obligation...you are to use your gift and you are to use it as one who has a stewardship before God to discharge. The variety...almost as endless as your imagination and beyond because each of us has one unique to ourselves, the multicolored grace of God. And the categories...speaking gifts, serving gifts.

Now, beloved, those are our instructions. The Christian life is fairly simple. Holiness with God, love with men, spiritual service, that's it. And since you have been transformed by Christ from the kingdom of darkness, translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, you have a desire then to obey.

Finally, we've seen the incentive...the Second Coming. We've seen the instructions...holiness, love, service. Third and finally...the intention..the intention. What's the goal of this? Verse 11 at the end, "So that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever amen." What's the intention of all that we do? What's the intention of our holiness, the intention of our love, and the intention of our service? That God may be...what?...glorified...that God may be glorified so that, Peter says, in all things, all the matters of Christian duty, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. This is, by the way, what we call a doxology...a doxology. A doxology is simply a word that means a word about praise, a word about glory. And so we are to glorify God. We can only glorify God, notice in verse 11, through Jesus Christ. "To whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever." And commentators have long discussions about whether "to whom" refers to God or whether "to whom" refers to Jesus Christ. And I think it is a blessed inspired ambiguity because the glory belongs to God in Christ and Christ in God. And so I want to glorify God, whatever I do, whether I eat or drink, 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, I want to do all to the glory of God. And the way to do that is to live in the light of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, is to fulfill the obligation of holiness, love and service in the power of the Spirit and thus to live to the glory of God.

Peter can't resist throwing an "amen" on the end of this. So let it be, let my life be to the glory of God. So we are to live in the disciplines of life. And as I said when we started all of this, the cost of discipleship is high but not as high as the cost of rejecting Christ. He expects the best out of us. And the goal, to give Him all the glory. So in the end, were we perfectly holy, perfectly loving, and perfectly serving we would take no credit, right? We would give Him all the glory. Let's pray.

Thank You, Father, for this wonderful evening we've shared together, for these great truths which the Spirit of God has vouched safe to our hearts in the Word and may we be obedient to be the people You want us to be, not just forgiven but transformed. And may that impulse that longs to obey attach itself to these commands and may we continually yield to the duty which You desire to produce in us

by Your Spirit. In the dear name of our Savior, we pray. Amen.

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