

## LOVING AND SERVING - 1 Peter 4:9-11 – April 25, 2021

We should be very thankful that God tells us how we're to live. No Christian should ever say, "*What am I supposed to do?*" or "*How am I supposed to live for God.*"

And that's because God gives us His word, this Bible right here, and in it, there are very clear instructions as to what we are to do, how we are to live. The epistles are more detailed than any other section of the Bible about how we're to live for God.

And we are going through 1 Peter, and now we are in 1 Pet. 4:7-11.

- Last week we talked about how we are to pray, and are to love fellow Christians.

And today we're going to talk about being hospitable and serving, and specifically, that we are to be using our spiritual gift.

1 Peter 4:9. The word hospitable comes from two words, one that means love and another that means strangers, and so it means "*loving strangers.*" We often think of hospitality as having people over to your house, entertaining people, but it means much more than that. Now when we say the word stranger, it can refer to anyone you don't know –we are talking here about loving someone you don't know, a stranger, someone new to you. It can refer to a new person at your workplace, to a sales associate you meet at a store, or to a new neighbor you meet, or to a person who sits next to you on an airplane. And it can mean another Christian you've never met, or an unbeliever you've never met.

It says you are to love them – and this word love is from the Greek *phileo*, and it means you are to be friendly to them, to be welcoming them, to be kind to them in your speech – you're to make them feel comfortable, to feel at home. Of course, you want to be this way towards people who come to our church, whether they're saved or lost, or whether you know whether they're saved or lost. And if you meet an unbeliever who you know is not saved, then this kind of love, this hospitality can be used by the Lord to draw that person to Himself, and be saved.

1 Tim 3:2 says being hospitable is one of the qualifications for being an elder in a church.

- Heb. 13:1-2 says the same thing as 1 Pet. 4:8-9. "*Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers*" but it adds, "*by this some have entertained angels.*"

- Ex. 22:1 says, "*You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him.*" For the Jews, this word stranger meant a foreigner. For us it can mean an illegal immigrant. Now your political position may be that you don't think they should be in this country, but the godly position, the Biblical position is that you are not to hurt them, but rather, you should love them.

You are to show hospitality without complaint. This means you shouldn't grumble or complain about some new person or taking time out of your schedule to love them, but from your heart, you should love them, for true and genuine hospitality must start in your heart.

¶ Peter 4:10-11. These two verses talk about how each and every Christian is to serve the Lord by using the spiritual gift God has given him. There are a number of thoughts I want to mention from these vs. and from others.

1. We're talking about spiritual gifts, gifts that are for the spiritual good and blessing of Christians. Now we all know about physical gifts and talents that we have - some people are good with their hands, or are talented athletically, or are good at singing. Now singing is a physical gift, but we're talking here about how someone can use that gift in spiritual way, for the benefit, blessing, and growth of other Christians.

2. Every Christian in the world has a spiritual gift. Every one of you, if you're a Christian, have received a spiritual gift. And the verb is past tense. You received this when you got saved. But God can give gifts to you at other times in your Christian life. And though there are categories of gifts, the gift you have is unique, and like a snowflake or a fingerprint, it's unlike that of any other Christian in the world.

3. The spiritual gift is a gift which means you didn't earn it, you didn't work for it, and you didn't get it because you're a nice person or because you did something special. You received this gift because God gave it to you, and He gave it to you free of charge. Now in this vs., there's the word grace, and it has the same Greek root word as gift, and it is emphasizing the point that God is freely giving us this gift. Presents are free, e.g. - Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 6:23, Eph. 3:7. *"I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given me according to the working of His power."* And so, we can say that a spiritual gift is the gift of God's grace working in us.

4. The giving and the working of the spiritual gift in and through our lives is a united work of the Trinity, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:4-7. But we see the special emphasis of the Holy Spirit with respect to our spiritual gift and it's work in us.

5. God has arranged the members of the church just the way that He wants. 1 Cor 12:18 – *"God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired."* God, through Christ and the Spirit, knows exactly what He's doing in building the church, and the working and the purpose and the effectiveness of the church relates directly to the spiritual gifts of the members of the church.

6. The spiritual gift or gifts a person has are for the good of the church. They are not for the person to be recognized, seen, or honored, but for the benefit, the building, the strengthening, the encouragement of the other members of the church. Now God has given you a spiritual gift so the church at large, or so individuals in the church can be built up, can get stronger, can spiritually grow.

1 Cor. 12:7 says the use of gifts is for the common good.

- 1 Peter 4:10 says it is to be used in serving one another.

- Eph. 4:11-13. This says that these gifts are given to certain members of the church so the rest of the members in the church are equipped so they can do the work of service. That is, the people with these gifts are to help others be more effective at serving in the church. Indeed, the use of these gifts helps the church to be spiritually healthy.

7. Each Christian is to be a good steward of the gift that God has given him.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, a steward was a manager of a household. He would be serving his master, using his master's resources, supplies, and money for the purposes of his master, and specifically for the proper functioning of the household. Rom. 16:23

As Christians, we're stewards, for God, our Master, has given us gifts and resources so we can serve the household of God, which is another name for the church. And we're to be good stewards, good workers, hard workers, faithful workers, and do everything just the way God wants us to. NIV, Luke 12:42, 1 Cor 4:1-2, Matt. 25:21

8. Peter goes on to say that using your gift is being a good steward of the manifold grace of God. A spiritual gift is a special working or effect of God's grace that is seen in and through your life. And this word manifold means varied, diverse, or multi-colored, which just means there are all kinds of spiritual gifts. As I said before, there are different categories of gifts that we read about in the Bible.

- Eph. 4:11, Rom. 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12:7-11 - Some of these gifts, ones we call sign gifts, are, I believe, no longer operating today, ones like the gift of healing and tongues.

9. Peter breaks down the gifts into two major categories, speaking and serving.

The speaking gifts are preaching, teaching, evangelism, knowledge, wisdom, and discernment. The serving gifts are administration, mercy, faith, and helps. But a person can have a teaching gift blended with some other gift, like mercy, faith or wisdom.

- The one who has a speaking gift is "*speaking the utterances of God,*" and therefore, has to be very careful to not go beyond what is written, and to be careful that he doesn't say anything that's not true or is error. 2 Tim. 2:15, Mal. 2:6-7, James 3:1

- The one who has a serving gift is to be serving by the strength of the Lord.

Sometimes one who is serving can trust in his own strength, and can get spiritually tired, and even burn out. And so we always need to trust the Lord and not ourselves.

10. As we serve the Lord, we need to remain humble, always remembering that the only reason we can serve is because of God, and the only reason we do serve is for God, and for His purposes and glory.

- 1 Cor. 12:14-26. A person with a spiritual gift can become proud, and think he's more important than others, and that he doesn't need other members of the church.

Or a person with a spiritual gift can feel inferior, that he's not as important as other members who have a different spiritual gift. But these ways of thinking are not right.

Rom. 12:3-5. There are many members in the body and each one is important, and no one member is more important than another member, or less important than another member. We're all important to God, to one another, and to the church.  
- 1 Cor 12:14, 20. We need to think of the church as one body with many members. And we all need to work together for the purposes and glory of God.

11. Col 3:22-24. We've been talking about how we're stewards, but we also need to remember that we're to be working for God. And we're to know that God sees us, and we're to fear Him, and please Him, and work wholeheartedly for Him. And one of the main ways we work for God is by using our spiritual gift, and some of our most important and effective work for God relates to using our spiritual gift. When I think of M.Luther, J.Calvin, C.Spurgeon, or J.MacArthur, I think of how each one of them had a teaching gift and there's no doubt that their most important work as Christians related to using their teaching gift. Anna - faith. Tabitha - giving, mercy

I encourage you to pray and ask God to help you use your spiritual gift, to give you the wisdom and strength to faithfully use it. You may even want to talk to other Christians, and get their counsel and thoughts. We have only one life to live for God, and we want to know absolutely for sure that we are doing exactly what God wants us to do.

12. Most importantly, the use of our spiritual gifts is to result in God being glorified. Now this last part of vs. 11 tells us a number of things:

a. It says in all things – and all things relates to all things in our lives and all things in the church. This is a very broad statement, for the use of our spiritual gifts is to have a profound and pervasive effect in our entire life and in the entire church, with the result that God is glorified in and through us.

b. We see that God is glorified through Christ. Phil. 2:9-11. But the overall result of the use of our gifts is that both God and Christ are glorified, are honored. John 17:4-5

c. It says that glory and dominion belong to God. This word dominion means force, might, strength, or power. And the idea is that God and Christ have all power, and therefore, have dominion, authority, control over everything and everyone in this universe. 1 Peter 5:11, Jude 24-25, Rev. 5:11

d. This glory and dominion is seen now but more so in the future, and it says forever and forever, but literally it says, "*unto the ages of the ages.*" And we know there's this age, the next age, the millennial kingdom age, and the eternal kingdom age.

And the bottom line is that to God belongs the dominion and the authority, and we are going to personally witness and see this in the ages to come. Psalm 145:1-2, 12-13