

Why You Are Gifted

Elected Unto Suffering

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Bible Text: 1 Peter 4:7-11

Preached on: Wednesday, June 13, 2012

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1 Peter 4, Verse 7, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent,” or intense, “charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.” That’s quite a stipulation, would you agree? Without grudging. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Verse 10, “As every man hath received the gift.” Look at that again, “As every man hath received the gift even so minister the same one to another.” And, “as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” So, if you have a gift of speaking, then speak like it’s God speaking and don’t get up with an agenda. That’s difficult for human beings who speak in the stead of God to really to be speaking what God wants said. “If any man minister.” Some of you are not necessarily gifted to speak but you might be gifted to minister. Of course, we’re not leaving females out, Peter’s not chauvinistic, it’s just the common term for mankind. There is nothing in the context that leads us to believe that men are gifted and women are not. If any man or woman, if any of you of mankind speak, speak as the oracles of God.

“If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things..” That God, why are we doing this? Why are we doing this? Verse 7, why are we waiting sober or clear minded watching unto prayer. Verse 8, why are we showing fervent love towards those in this room? Why are we doing that? Verse 9, why are we showing hospitality without grudging? Why are we ministering the gifts that God has given to us in the same manner to others in this room? Why are we doing that? Why are we doing that? Is it so that we feel gifted or that we feel used because the truth is, when we’re being used, we feel used and it feels nice, doesn’t it? There’s a reason why I enjoy preaching. Because I’m gifted to do it. There’s a reason why some of you are amazing at other things. And some of you are amazing Bible teachers and here’s why. Probably, you’re gifted, yes? It means that I have a desire to do it and God gives me a certain ability that I don’t typically have. Talk to my parents about when I was 13 and you would’ve been even more sure of it.

“If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability.” So why are we doing this? Are we doing this because we want to feel used? Well, it is nice to feel used. Are we doing this because we want to help others? Well, that is nice, we want to help others. Are we doing it so that we can help other people feel loved? That is nice and we want people to feel loved. I mean, people that are recipients of fervent charity are happy, but is that why we do it? Do I exercise my gifts in this assembly, do you exercise your gifts of leadership, of ministry, of mercy, of giving, do you do that because you feel good because you do feel good sometimes when you operate within your gifts?

Some people are amazing craftsmen. Ken, did you feel good in Brazil building that church? You’re gifted to do it. God took something you’re good at doing before you were converted and said, “I’m going to use it as something for my church.” You enjoyed it, didn’t you? People were blessed. But why do I speak, why do you build, why do you teach, why do you help, why do you install doors, why do you over and over and over again? Why are some of you a blessing to me? Is it so that the bald guy who yells at me on Wednesday nights and teaches me sometimes on Sunday mornings and preaches sometimes on Sunday nights and coaches my children

and teaches my children, is it so that he knows that I love him? Is it so that he knows that I'm a good person? Why does he minister to me? Is it so that I can feel like he really likes me, that I'm noticed in the church? No, I'm so glad that Peter did not leave it to our guess. Isn't that nice of Peter? The Apostle Peter said, "You might get it wrong if I leave it up to you to guess the answer."

So God in his mercy told us why. Here we are in the middle of verse 11, "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." God, I want to say it again, "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Now, in the context, look I know what we do with the verses. You've heard me say it, it's almost cliché, you probably don't want to hear me say it, but we almost yank them out for the good of a t-shirt, a bumper sticker, a billboard, but they belong right where they are.

So we don't have to wonder. "Peter, what do you mean by all things?" Because what is he talking about in the context? "In all things that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Are we talking about the way we bounce a beach ball on the beach? The way that I cheer for my ball team in the gym? Or are we talking about the gifts that God gives me to exercise through fervent charity while waiting for the Christ who is at hand. That is why, isn't it? That is our motive.

I want you to notice, please, and there's no way that I could exhaust this. It's like drinking the ocean. I've narrowed it down to this: "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be the praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." That wasn't good enough. I could not exhaust that, I can't even preach on that. The truth is, I'm fooling myself and I'm taking a risk here of wearing you out with this verse. I don't want to. I want you to drink in like it's God speaking to you. But the truth is, I might wear you out with this verse because I cannot talk to you skillfully in 35 minutes about all that this says. There is no way I can. "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Because the truth is that we could sit here and talk about what it means for Christ and God to have dominion and majesty for ever and ever. I mean, that would take a while to talk about that, right? Praise and dominion for all the ages without end.

I'm amazed at people that pooh-pooh songs that repeat words. Have you read Revelation 4 lately? Holy, Holy, Holy. Isaiah 6, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the earth is full of his glory. So there is reason to believe that we will, indeed, praise for ever and ever. Maybe you won't be wearing a choir robe, but you will praise and you offer him dominion and you will be glad that he has it for ever and ever.

Now, where did Peter get this idea? Because the truth is, we know that he hung out with one particular apostle a lot. Who was it? Come on, be crazy. John. He hung out with John a lot both in the gospels and in the book of Acts. We know that both of them were a long time with who? Jesus. Jesus said, "Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." This is what Jesus said, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Obviously we know it wasn't Jesus praying to the Father, "forgive me my sin." He was setting up a model prayer for the disciples and here is how he said it. "Deliver us from evil." This is how he said you should close your prayer, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen."

So, Peter had a good teacher. He said everything that you enjoy in the church among the body of Christ, you understand that you enjoy it not so that you can feel better, feel loved, feel fulfilled, felt needs met, all that. It has its place but it is not in the place that "God in all things might be glorified in Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." That will never get old. What a teacher Peter had. The only Son of God said, "This is how you should say the last bit of your prayer, 'Glory to the Father for ever and ever. Amen.'"

And it was John, Peter's friend, who said in John 1:14, "We beheld his glory." The glories of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He said in 1:17, "No man has seen God at any time but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared and we saw the glory of God." It's a lot on Peter's mind. What is it about the glory of God that all of a sudden Peter breaks into this ecstatic, spontaneous, suitable, superhuman praise to God? "To whom be praise and dominion."

When we look back at chapter 2, verse 12, one page back, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold." What are they going to do? What are they going to do? They are going to glorify God in the day of visitation.

Pastor Dwayne preached last week on verses 14 of chapter 4 and verse 16. Look there, I want you to see that this is a thought that dominates Peter's mind. Peter wants Berean Baptist Church to feel love. Peter wants Berean Baptist Church to feel used. Peter wants Berean Baptist Church to be fully functional followers of Jesus Christ. Wants Berean Baptist Church to reach in their neighborhoods, reaching Fayetteville, reaching Fort Bragg, reaching North Carolina, reaching the world. But Peter has one underlying motive. "That God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ." Oh my goodness, we get so sidetracked.

Verse 14, "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you, for the spirit of glory resteth upon you and on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." Again, the second time in three chapters Peter says, here's the bottom line, people will glorify your God when you suffer and do good.

Verse 16, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God. Let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God. I guess that we should probably talk about what glorification actually means. Here is what F. B. Meyer said, "What is glory and how can God be glorified?" Listen, "Glory is the manifestation of the hidden attributes of the ever blessed God." Let's say that again. Glory is the manifestation or the revealing of the hidden attributes of the ever blessed God. Let me say that again. Glory is an uncovering of the invisibility of God in his attributes. Glory is a taste of heaven. Glory, and it's all through the scripture, you've been quoting the verses for decades. "My God shall supply all our needs according to his riches," in Philippians 4:19, riches in what? Romans 3:23, "All sin and come short of the?" We're talking about the glory as a touch of heaven.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost 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." How does this work God? How is that you reveal your glory and yet I am glorifying you? What does that mean? Here's what it means, if glory means it is a display of the hidden attributes of God, that means it is a taste of heaven emptied down on earth and when we glorify God we're taking everything that God has dumped on us and thrown it back up to him. What? We're reflecting the image, we're reflecting the image of God. To the world, Peter says in 1 Peter 2:12, 4:14, 4:16. We reflect the hidden attributes of God to a world that watches us suffer and serve in fervent charity. I said, that when we glorify God that means that we are displaying what the world can't see unless it sees God reflecting heaven on us.

Matthew had it right, too. 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth but if the salt has lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of men." You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, put it under a bushel, but they put it on a candlestick that it might give light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they might see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." That they might what? That they might take that taste of heaven and offer it back up in the very next phrase, "To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

As God dumps down a flavor of what heaven is like in his attributes, the things that God is, we in turn take a taste of what heaven will be like for us and offer it to him now. Some of you are not convinced. Look at chapter 2:7, “Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious. But unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builder disallowed, the same is named the head of the corner. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” Alright, that’s them. They were appointed to that but you, ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. You are reflecting the character of your God. You say, “How do you know that?” Because I love context. Look back at chapter 1 and look at verse 13, “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you,” when? “at the revealing or unveiling of Jesus Christ,” at the end of time. Verse 14, “As obedient children.” What are you doing as obedient children? You are reflecting the character of your Father. You’re obedient children, “not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of lifestyle, all manner of conversation.” He says right here, “You are not what you used to be, you are children of God.” And so, just like he is holy, you are his holiness. Holiness is reflecting the character of your Father. It’s not “not wearing certain things.” It’s not “not wearing your hair a certain way.” It’s not any of those things in particular.

I was reading my journal from Pastor Dwayne and my trip to China. I was reading a journal and I said, I think on the last entry, “Humility is plentiful in the church of China, but holiness is as lacking here as it is in America.” They’re inundated with the music there, the movies there, the modesty or lack thereof there. The Christians have the same trouble in China that they do here. They have our theaters, they have our music, they have our disrespect, they have everything. I promise you, holiness is not in great supply there.

But the holiness that Peter is talking about to these believers, chapter 1:1 in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, that belongs to the children of God whether Chinese or American. That belongs to the children of God. So, God says, because you’re going to be holy “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation,” that is back to chapter 1, Why? Peter is so good to us. By aid of the Holy Spirit, he says, “I’m not going to leave it up to your best guesswork. You might get it wrong.” So here it is, verse 9, “That you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” I’ve only said it in like four different sermons, let’s see if we can get it right here. “

That you might show forth the praises.” Remember I said praises is used by Peter in three other places in his epistle and it is translated, what in those places? You would think so because of the context of this message. Virtue. Do you remember that? 2 Peter, chapter 1, “To godliness and virtue.” Virtue, remember that? The same Greek word is “praises” here. So, 1 Peter 2:9, you’re not like everyone else, you’re children of God and so you reflect the virtue of the one who called you. Reflect his virtue. Hang on now, if we’re supposed to reflect the character of God, whatever he is in heaven, when he reveals it, it is glory from heaven. Remember? Glory is a taste of what we cannot see and it will not be seen, the virtue of God will not be seen, if people who are called into light are not reflecting that glory, that virtue.

Back to chapter 4. Why is it, why is it that we are gifted? To love intensely. To wait for the coming of Christ. To exercise our gifts for the church. Is it so that we can feel better? No, a thousand times, no. It is so that we can show the world what God looks like. I know what you’re thinking, “I’m just a gas station attendant.” No, you’re a gas station attendant showing the world what Jesus would look like when he takes your money for gas. You say, “I’m just a lawyer.” No, you’re not just a lawyer. You are a display to the world of what Jesus would look like in litigation. “Well, I’m just a doctor.” No, wrong again. You are a display to the world what Jesus would look like if he were delivering a baby, if he were taking care of you by your bedside. “Well, I’m just a soldier.” No, wrong again. You are a display of what this world would see if they saw Jesus serving his country.

We are displays of the virtue of God that is unnoticeable if God’s glory does not shine. And if we are not reflections of that glory, if we are not displayers of that virtue, then this world will not know the virtue of God. God is awesome. How do you know? His people are awesome. God is holy. How do I know? His people are

holy. God is amazing. God is benevolent. God meets the need of our heart. How do I know? Because the believer is down at Bereans Baptist Church meet the need of each other's hearts. John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," because you give out gospel tracts, you hand out water at the lights, you serve pizza to people who are without food, you have a... No! "By this you all may know that my disciples because you love one another." Not because your Pastor preaches amazing sermons. Not because you have immaculate lawns in front of your church. Not because you have super duper billboards and your literature looks like it just came out of a publisher, but because his people reflect his glory, his virtue.

So, I'll give you a little warning. Discussing the glory of God is entirely overwhelming. Why? I'm going to give you three reasons. The glory of God being discussed in this room is entirely overwhelming. Number one, because it is the basis of God's eternal plan. Now, hold the phone, and keep your seats. It is the basis of God's eternal plan. Are you listening? You might want to get a pen out, I'm going to give you a few references to write down next to 1 Peter 4:11. I'm going to give you three. First, Isaiah, chapter 48, verse 11, God says, "I am the Lord, that is my name, my glory I will not share with another." Did you all get that? My glory I will not share with another. Then, on the night of Jesus' arrest, John 17:5, Jesus says, "Father, restore to me the glory which we shared before the world was." What does that mean? What does that mean about Jesus? I heard a few people say it. I like it, the other was just sort of white noise. Isaiah 48, I just couldn't hear it exactly. God said, "I am the Lord and I won't share my glory with another." Jesus says, "Father, we shared glory before the world was." Tell me about Jesus. He's God. He's God.

Write this third reference down next to 1 Peter 4:11, Hebrews 2:10. Listen to this, this is enough to fuel you. "It became him for whom are all things and by whom are all things in making the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering to bring," listen to this now, "to bring many sons to glory." The purpose of Jesus Christ dying on the cross was to bring many sons to glory.

Therefore, therefore, God would not share his glory with anybody outside the Trinity. So, you must, therefore, be counted within one of them. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." People who are saved are where? "In Christ" who shares glory with the Father as a person of the Godhead. Think about that. God doesn't share his glory with anybody else. And his sole purpose was to be glorified in sending the second person, the Word, to redeem a group of human beings of Adam's race to share the glory that he only shares with the Godhead. The glory that the Father and the Son shared before the world was. Christ's purpose was to come and secure a people to share that glory with. Does that help anybody in here? So, that's why discussing the glory of God is a tad bit overwhelming for me.

The second reason why discussing the glory of God is a tad bit overwhelming for me is because it is that glory which Christ left to come and bring me back to. 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor that ye through his poverty might be rich." Isn't that a blessing?

The third reason why the glory of God is a tad bit overwhelming for me is because the glory of God was the sole function of the second person of the Trinity the entire time that he was here. He said, "All the time in the book of John, my meat is to do the will of him who sent me." John 1:14, "And we beheld his glory." Now, if I were reading that I would think immediately John is talking about, what episode in the life of Christ? Not at the transfiguration. Did you know that John is the only gospel writer who doesn't cover the transfiguration? So, that's out. But, when Judas took the sop and left the room to go and betray Jesus, here is what Jesus said, John 13:31, "Therefore, when Judas was gone out Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him." John said, "We beheld his glory." Let me tell you when we beheld it. When he was suffering. When he was betrayed. When he was in the hands of sinful men.

Those are three pretty lofty reasons why just even talking about the glory of God is a tad bit overwhelming. Now, taking what you know from John, here we are in 1 Peter. Look in 2:21 please. I can't get away from this.

We keep going back to the gospel because we have nothing to talk about if we don't talk about the gospel. Nothing. Now, what we know from John based on when he was glorified and God was glorified in him was when Judas betrayed him and his death was as good as accomplished. 1 Peter 2:21, I know what time it is, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

Alright, question, When was God glorified in Christ? Say it again. When he was suffering. So, if we want to glorify God in Christ which is what 1 Peter 4:11 says, "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." Then that means that we actually have to follow in his steps. Alright, so Jesus says, "I am glorifying God as I suffer. You who are called out of darkness into my marvelous light, come on over here." 1 Peter 2:9, darkness into light. Isn't that what it says, "Show forth the praises," isn't that what it says? "Show forth God's virtue." Here's how you do it, "Follow in my steps." What am I doing as I glorify Christ? I'm suffering. I suffer, I glorify Christ. "If you want to follow in my steps, you want to glorify Christ, you want to glorify God? You have to follow in my steps."

And so, here we are, 1 Peter 4:11. Here is what I want you to take away from this room. It is the supreme objective of your gifting. Alright, so based on what we know about glorifying God, let me say it this way, you are not achieving the objective of your gifting if God's virtues are not displayed through you. Let me say it again. If people cannot learn about God through Bill Sturm's conduct, then it doesn't matter how many good sermons I preach, how many old ladies I help across the street, how many dollars I give in the offering plate, none of that matters if God's virtue is not declared in the world. Through what? Through suffering. And while I'm suffering—waiting for the coming of Christ—verse 6, loving people fervently, verse 8, serving people with my gifts, verse 10 and 11. What is glory again? God unveiling things about himself and how does God get glory back from people? We saw it in Matthew 5:16, 1 Peter 2:12, 4:14. He sees it when we reflect the character of God back to the world. They learn about the invisible God through the conduct of his children. So, the prime objective of our gifting is not so that we feel used. It is so that people will learn God's character through us and be glorified.

Now, some practical ideas. Your gifting is for the church. Therefore, I'm going to say this very carefully because I've seen some folks say, "I don't feel like I've received a gift." Now, if it were just me I could say, "You know, I'm just being judgmental. I need to get right with God." That is why I exercise my gifts to the brothers and the sisters, so that people will know the character of God through the way I exercise my gifts to the believers. And they are gifts to the believers. The gifts are not for me. The gifts are through me, to the church. "Well, I feel so good when I'm operating within my gifts." Really, I know how you feel. Exercise your gifts so that people feel like they've been given a gift. And if people never feel like they're getting a gift through your gifts, you're not gifted in that area.

Not everyone can cook the way other people can cook. It doesn't mean that he shouldn't do it, it means that you probably shouldn't tell everyone that that's your gift. Not everyone can paint like other people. It doesn't mean you shouldn't paint, it means you shouldn't tell people that that's your gift. Not everyone can sing like other people. That doesn't mean that you shouldn't sing, it means you shouldn't tell everyone that that's your gift and offer it as a gift to them. I'm glad you're laughing because you're going to get home tonight and you're going to say, "I can't believe he talked to me like that." That's how it works, right?

So, get yourselves to a place where not only are you confident that you're operating within your gifting, so that people feel like they've been given a gift, and God is glorified. That is, the world sees, "Wow, God is amazing. How do I know? Because Mary Shepherd's amazing in the way that she exercises in her gifts to the church.

That doesn't mean, "I'm not very gifted. I guess I'm not working in a nursery because I am not gifted with kids." There are times when we do things that we're not gifted to do because it is a thing called duty. I'm not going to say, "I've got the spiritual gift of mowing the lawn." But the fact is, my lawn sometimes needs to be

mowed so I yank the thing out of the garage and exercise in an area wherein I am not gifted. But I'm not going to tell you that's my spiritual gift. I hope you're benefiting from my gift of lawn mowing. Because you're not going to think you're getting a gift. And God will not be glorified in the same manner.

Find a place that you can say, "I feel like I worshipped today in my work." Did you hear what I said? If you can't leave your work and say, "I worshipped today," there are some things you can do. You can either get your heart right with God and find out it really is, maybe your gifting in the area that you are working. Or, you get to a place where you can change things at your workplace. Or, leave. But if you stay put, have a rotten attitude and tell everyone you're a believer, God is not being glorified. Amen.

This is F. B. Meyer again, "It would never disappoint," listen here, "if we work for any lower motive, we are always liable to disappointment. Either the desire of our hearts is not realized or when we have attained it, we are oppressed with a vague sense of dissatisfaction and depression." Are you with me? Instead of thinking, "My, I've achieved something," you are despondent. "What else is there to do? Because you didn't do it for God. But here's a motive which can never mislead us, it is always in front of us, is ever fresh, inspiring, ennobling, inspiring, elevating. When we have done our best, it is still in front of us, beckoning us to a loftier sense, to more strenuous endeavors and the impression produced on us is one of adoration and devotion which makes all our work, all our life and work, a means of grace. Listen, if we are sensible of working from a wrong or an inferior motive, let us bring our being to God and tell him that we desire and will nothing so eagerly as to live and work from this loftiest of motives for his glory. Ask him to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit. Expect that by his Spirit he will replace the worse by the better until your soul is on fire for the glory of God." Why? So that God will be glorified in Christ, who is in you and you in him, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.