



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

# **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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## **Living in Light of Eternity, 4**

1 Peter 4:7-11

The word of God contains some incredible promises for all of us.

Philippians 1:6, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

Christ told the people of His day this:

John 6:39, "*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose*

nothing, but raise it up on the last day.”

John said this:

1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

As wonderful as are these promises, and they are, did you know that God’s program for bringing these promises about in your life involves you and me ministering to each another?

Hebrews 3:12-13, “Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called ‘Today,’ lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Our perseverance is rooted in the mutual encouragement which God calls each of us to in Christ!

Galatians 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.”

Our ability to abound in love comes in part as we “bear one another’s burdens.”

It is in this context that we think of Spiritual Gifts. Because of our divinely ordained role in the growth and maturation of the church, God has given each of us spiritual tools to bring about His purpose and will in the lives of one another!

Peter is writing this section in light of the Neronian persecution which, like a tsunami, was headed for the church. Accordingly, the apostle exhorted his fellow brethren with practical teaching on what it looks like to be a man or woman of God in a hostile world. Now knowing that the half-life of lone ranger Christians is quite short, Peter ended this section with a mini seminar on the purpose, place and use of our spiritual gifts.

### The Calling Involved in Every Spiritual Gift

1 Peter 4:10d, “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

First, let’s talk about Peter’s use of the “grace of God” here. This expression is used in this text as well in the rest of Scripture in reference to formal ministry. Paul uses it this way in Romans.

Romans 15:15-16, “But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God, to be a minister of Christ Jesus

to the Gentiles...”

In the context of the work of ministry, “the grace of God” can be used in reference to the calling placed on our life by God! That is why Paul wrote of Christ in Romans 1.

Romans 1:5, “Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of the faith among all the Gentiles...”

The grace by which Paul was saved included a divine call to the apostolic office. From this I hope you see that the grace of God operating in Paul’s life included a specific calling to ministry!

That being the case notice, in our text Peter is using the “grace of God” as a description of the spiritual gifting which God has entrusted to each of us (just as Paul did in Ephesians 4:7). And because this gift is vast and varied, Peter spoke of it here as a “manifold grace.”

The word for “manifold” (ποικίλος (*poikilos*)) was used in Bible times in reference to something being “many colored” or “multi-faceted” and so it is translated as “varied” or “manifold.” And that is the nature of the gifting of each one of us. As we have seen:

- To one God might give one-fifth teaching, three-tenths mercy, and one-half administration.
- To another, God might grace them with one-fourth leading, one-third helps, one-sixth administration, and one-fourth mercy.

Truly, because the Spirit’s distribution of our spiritual gifting is so vast and broad, as workers in Christ’s Kingdom we — in our gifting and calling — are as unique as a snowflake! John MacArthur wrote of this:

Two believers may have the gift of teaching, but each will demonstrate it with a unique blend of grace and faith. That provides for edifying and useful spiritual diversity within the church. One leader’s preaching may emphasize the showing of mercy and gentleness, whereas another’s may emphasize the discerning of truth, and another’s the wisdom in its application. (MacArthur, 2004, p. 244)

As that is the case, what do you suppose is the calling of God when it comes to our spiritual gifting? It is NOT unto fruit or the changing of people’s lives (this must never be our focus). RATHER, our call simply is unto faithfulness — that we might prove to be “good stewards [that is what we are after] of the manifold grace of God.”

In this regard, let me share with you a wonderful truth about our spiritual gifting. In Bible times, a “steward” was more than a servant. He was one who was entrusted with the authority of the one he served. And so, in we read of “Shebna the steward” (Isaiah 22:21) who held the highest position in Judah next to Hezekiah. He was the king’s closest advisor as well as the one who administered Hezekiah’s regency. Yet the position of a “steward” wasn’t

confined to an office related to a king; recall Joseph's position in Potiphar's household; he served as a "steward."

Genesis 39:4, 6: "...[Potiphar] made [Joseph] overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge... So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate..."

That is what a "steward" was. Accordingly, for you and me to be a "steward" in God's Kingdom is to be one in whom God has entrusted His authority to serve on His behalf. And that is what every spiritual gifting is! It is NOT simply a tool with which to serve the Lord and so His people. It is NOT something we own, NOR something that arises out of ourselves. RATHER, it is a calling vested with Divine enabling (that's our gifting) and authority (that's our position) unto the attaining of Christ's purpose and will!! That is why Peter wrote...

1 Peter 4:11b, "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..."

Do you see? The service you would render in the name of Christ via a spiritual gift does NOT come from you. RATHER, it is God's power and so work flowing through you! With the exercise of every gift we truly stand on holy ground! And so as we might utilize any of the speaking gifts, we must endeavor to speak as Christ would if He were the one speaking. As we utilize any of the serving gifts, we must do so mindful that at that moment we are the feet and hands of the Lord! Do you remember Christ's words to Paul when the Lord redeemed him?

Acts 9:4, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

Thinking of the speaking gift he had received, Paul wrote this:

2 Corinthians 5:20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

In light of this we must see that with the spiritual gifting that God has entrusted to us, our call is to serve as a channel or a vehicle through which the Spirit of God might bring about His Divine purpose! Spurgeon wrote of this:

God gives much to you that you may give it to others; it is only meant to run through you as through a pipe. You are a steward. If a steward should receive his lord's goods and keep them for himself, he would be an unfaithful steward. (Spurgeon, 2013, p. 1 Peter 4:10)

The focus with this therefore is NOT the fruit or the effect of our service, BUT our being faithful with the gifting He has deposited in us!! In this regard, I always think of how Christ glorified God in His service on the earth.

John 17:4, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast

given Me to do.”

That must ever and always be our focus when it comes to our labors in the Kingdom of God: Simply being a good steward of the gift entrusted to us! It truly is this, among other things, that is the difference between sinning out and wearing out when it comes to ministry!

Recall Samuel’s life. He served the people of God for years executing the gifting and calling which the Lord placed upon his life. Yearly he rode a circuit in which he oversaw God’s worship, served the people by judging their disputes, praying for them, and loving them. In fact, when after a long path of many years where God’s people rebelled against the Lord, but then came back to the Lord and so asked Samuel for help, remember what Samuel told the people:

1 Samuel 12:23-24, “...far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way. Only fear the Lord and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.”

This no doubt is one of countless acts of love and service which Samuel gave to the people of God throughout his life as a prophet/judge! Now, after such sacrifices and acts of love and devotion, how did Samuel’s countrymen repay him?

1 Samuel 8:5b, “...they said to him, ‘Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.’”

How did the people of God repay Samuel for all that he had done for them? The moment a better offer presented itself, the people of God disposed of Samuel! Now understandably, Samuel took great offense! Yet this is where Samuel learned a crucial truth when it comes to Kingdom service- a principle we too must learn in the exercise of our gifts...

1 Samuel 8:7, “And the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.’”

Every gifting from the Lord is a “stewardship” of God’s divine power and purpose. Our call therefore is NOT to do great things with them, BUT simply to be faithful to use them! This truth is what is behind Peter’s call for us to be “good stewards of the manifold grace of God”!

### The Types of Spiritual Gifts

1 Peter 4:11a, “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...”

Peter here is talking about the two types or categories of spiritual gifts which God gives us. From this text we learn that the spiritual gifts God gives are of two types: they are either

speaking gifts or serving gifts. And yet, there is more in Scripture when it comes to understanding the “Types of the Spiritual Gifts” that God gives to His church.

There are seventeen spiritual gifts referenced in the Bible. Of these gifts, notice first they can be separated based on whether they are temporary gifts or permanent gifts. As to the temporary gifts consider their identity (there are five of them).

1. Prophesying (Romans 12:6b [cf. 1 Corinthians 12:10b, 29b])
2. Healings (1 Corinthians 12:9b, 28b)
3. Miracles (1 Corinthians 12:10a, 28d)
4. Tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10c, 28h)
5. Interpretation of Tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10d)

Each of these gifts are temporary because they deal primarily with the foundation of the church, specifically the establishment of the Canon/the Bible.

Ephesians 2:19-20, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*.”

In this regard it is important that you understand that prophesy and tongues were revelatory gifts given to proclaim a message from the Lord. In the case of prophesy, this gift was primarily given as a vehicle of revelation by which God gave His word/the Bible to His people (cf. Exodus 20:18-19; 24:7). Recall Peter’s words:

2 Peter 1:20-21, “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

And while tongues were a revelatory gift (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:2; Ephesians 3:4-5), nevertheless its primary function during the Apostolic age was to proclaim God’s judgment against His unbelieving people.

1 Corinthians 14:20-22a, “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, ‘By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,’ says the Lord. [Paul is referencing here Isaiah 28:11 by which Isaiah informed the people of God that when Jerusalem is filled with people speaking a foreign language (speaking of the third exile in 586 BC where the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem), they would know that they were under the judgment of God]. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers...”

Tongues were intended to be statement primarily to God’s people that all who persists in unbelief are under the judgment of God! Like the rending of the Temple Curtain upon Christ’s

death, the exercise of the gift of tongues was another warning from God that “unless you repent you will perish!”

As to miracles, they served as a divine credential or stamp of authenticity that the prophet speaking by way of revelation was sent by God (cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-5). We see it in the life of Christ during His third year of ministry:

John 10:22-25, “At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, ‘How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these bear witness of Me.’”

The miracles Christ did were intended to authenticate His Identity as the Son of God! And so, the temporary gifts are so named because once God completed the Canon— the word that He intended to give to His people — there no longer was a need for these gifts — which brings us to the permanent gifts.

## Permanent Gifts

Based upon the text before us, they fall generally into two categories:

1. Speaking Gifts
  - a. Teaching (Romans 12:7b [cf. Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28a])
  - b. Exhorting (Romans 12:8a)
  - c. The Word of Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8a)
  - d. The Word of Knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8b)
2. Serving Gifts
  - a. Service (Romans 12:7a [cf. 1 Corinthians 12:5])
  - b. Giving (Romans 12:8b)
  - c. Leading (Romans 12:8c)
  - d. Showing Mercy (Romans 12:8d)
  - e. Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9a)
  - f. Discernment of Spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10b)
  - g. Helps (1 Corinthians 12:28f)
  - h. Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28g)

And as to their time period; Paul, speaking of the church as a building with Christ, the Apostles, and Prophets being the foundation, Paul references Christ:

Ephesians 2:21-22, “In whom the whole building [the church], being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Clearly, God's work and will for the church in this age will NOT be completed until Christ returns! As that is the case, then we understand that the gifts of the Spirit have and will continue to be operative in the church until Christ's Second Coming! This means that though this passage was written 2,000 years ago, it is as applicable and relevant today as it was when it was first written! So, receive this as if written directly to you.

1 Peter 4:10-11, "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 may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."