

“Use Your Gifts to Serve One Another”
(1 Peter 4:10-11)

Introduction: This morning we were looking at the importance of redeeming the time, since there is so little of this precious commodity in our lives. One of the ways in which we saw that we can make wise use of our time was by engaging in acts of charity, especially in light of the Sheep and Goat Judgment of Matthew 25, and especially as we see the end of all things drawing near. This is what Peter has been telling us in his first letter. In 4:7, we read, “The end of all things is at hand.” In his opinion the end was very near. Therefore, he told us we are to focus on those things which are most important for our souls. He said, “Be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.” That is, we are to think clearly and not be intoxicated by the things of the world, so that we can see the need of prayer and practice it with fervency. He continued, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” The most important thing is that we be able to love one another beyond a mere superficiality. Love, a godly love, when it truly dwells in our hearts, is able to cover over most or all of the faults that we still possess in our imperfection. This can go a long ways in quenching schism and bringing real peace and unity among the people of God. And this is what love will do. He goes on further to say, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.” This is another manifestation of love. The opening up of your time, your life, and your home, to strangers in order to remove the alienation they feel when they first come into your company, is what hospitality literally means. All of us feel uncomfortable when we come into a strange place. If no one opens their hearts to you, then you will probably leave and not come back. If you find at least one person who is willing to befriend you, then you will probably return. The sooner the people of God invite you into their lives, the sooner your estrangement will be removed.

But Peter this evening gives to us another way in which we can demonstrate Christian love to one another, and subsequently, another way in which we can redeem the precious little time that we have to God’s glory, and that is to minister our gifts to one another. And that is what we will look at this evening, namely,

As a believer you have a spiritual gift entrusted to you which God expects you to use for the good of your brethren.

I. First I Want You to See that Every Believer Has Received at Least One Gift, and Perhaps More than One, Probably at Conversion, as a Part of His or Her Stewardship. He Says, “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

- A. God Has Entrusted You with at least One Spiritual Gift to Equip You for Some Form of Ministry.
 - 1. He says, “As each one has received a special gift.”
 - a. It is plain in Scripture that each one has a gift. This is not a natural gift which you inherited from your parents.
 - b. Rather, this is a special gift, a gift from the Spirit, which most likely was given to you when you were converted and engrafted into the body of Christ by the Spirit.

- c. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greek, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”
 - d. When the Lord regenerated you by His Spirit, He immersed you into the body of Christ by His Spirit. This is what Spirit baptism is: His uniting you with Christ. When you became a part of the body, you then had a function that you were to perform, as a part of that body, as Paul tells us in this same chapter, and in Ephesians 4.
 - e. But you are not able to do your part by nature, that is, apart from the grace of Christ. What you are to do requires a special enablement. And so that is what the Lord gives you when He puts you into the body.
 - f. Paul says earlier in chapter 12, “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (v. 7).
 - g. In Ephesians 4:15-16, he writes, “But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, *even* Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”
 - h. You are a part of the body, and as a part you have your role to play in its growth and/or its service.
 - i. Obviously, it is important to know what your gifts are so that you can faithfully minister them.
2. God gives you this gift as a part of your stewardship for Him.
- a. Peter says, “As good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
 - b. The needs within the body are so diverse, that there are many expressions of the grace of God in the gifts given, as well as many ways in which the gifts are administered.
 - c. Paul writes, again in 1 Corinthians 12, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*” (vv. 4-6).
 - d. There is not enough time to go into all the differing gifts or administrations of those gifts. But under my second point, I do want us to take a brief look at how Peter divides them into two categories.
 - e. But what I want you to see here is that we are stewards of this multifaceted grace of God.
 - f. We are stewards over everything which the Lord gives us, from our time and strength, to our possessions and livelihood. Nothing belongs to us. All of it belongs to Him. We are simply managing it for Him until the time of our managing is over.
 - g. The same is true of spiritual gifts. They are things which are given to us to manage for the good of the body. We might even say that they are not properly ours, but they belong to the body. And when we do not minister them to the body, we are taking away something which the Lord has given to her.
 - h. There is a very stern and sobering warning in Scripture which tells us of the

seriousness with which the Lord takes our stewardship. In Matthew 25, we read of the parable of the Ten Virgins, the parable of the talents, and the Sheep and Goat Judgment.

- i. The parable of the Ten Virgins is to warn us to always be ready for the return of our Lord, whether that return be for us personally, or especially if it is for His church.
- j. The parable of the Talents is to exhort us to industry with the use of the resources that He has entrusted to us as His servants. It reads as follows, “For [the kingdom of heaven] is just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who *had received* the two *talents* gained two more. But he who received the one *talent* went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves *came and *settled accounts with them. And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.' The one also who *had received* the two talents came up and said, ' Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents. ' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no *seed*. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.' But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no *seed*. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my *money* back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' For to everyone who has shall *more* be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:14-30).
- k. The point is that God doesn't give us these gifts for ourselves alone, but to minister them to others. And if we do not use His gifts for His purposes, then not only that, but all we possess, or really only think we possess, will be taken away from us. Jesus said, “If you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?” (Luke 16:12).

B. The Way that You Can Faithfully Manage Your Gift Is By Ministering It to Your Brethren.

1. Peter says, “Employ it in serving one another.”
 - a. You are to minister it, use it.
 - b. You are to use it for that purpose for which God intended it, to serve the body of

Christ. That seems simple enough.

- c. God says, “Here is a gift for the building up of My body. Use it faithfully, and when the time comes for My Son to reward His saints with His rewards of grace, He will richly recompense you.”
 - d. Our response as faithful servants need only be, “By your grace and mercy, I will do all in my power to be faithful to the charge you have committed to me.”
2. And notice one other thing Peter adds: you are to employ it “as” you received it.
 - a. How did you receive it? Jesus said, “Freely you received” (Matt. 10:8).
 - b. In the same way you are to administer it, “Freely give” (ibid.).
 - c. There is to be no charge, no coercion needed or begging, you are to give of it freely in the same way in which the Lord gave His gifts freely.

II. Secondly, You Are to Minister This Gift in Such a Way that God Is Glorified by It.

Peter Writes, “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.” (NB: It is not clear if these following examples are broad or narrow. If broad, they refer to all the possible speaking and serving gifts. If narrow, then perhaps to the preaching of the Word and other ministrations of the minister or deacons.)

- A. As I Said Earlier, All of God’s Gifts Can Be Divided into These Two Categories: Those which Pertain to Speaking and those which Pertain to Serving.
 1. What else is there in the service of God?
 - a. God has established officers in His church called elders, who have the primary responsibility to teach and to preach God’s Word.
 - b. He has also appointed deacons to minister His Word in helping the poor.
 - c. He has given authority to parents to teach His Word to His covenant children.
 - d. He has charged the older and more mature women of the church to teach and encourage the younger women to “love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored” (Titus 2:4-5).
 - e. He has charged all of us to admonish and exhort one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).
 - f. And He has commanded all of us to take His Word to those outside the church that they might be saved (Matt. 28:18-20).
 - g. Outside of the instruction of the Word, what is left besides service? Feeding the poor, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, waiting on tables, administrating in the church, all of these are different ways of serving.
 2. If you want to see more comprehensive lists in Scripture of the various gifts to help you discern what yours is, you may turn to Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30, Ephesians 4:11, and of course, our text this evening.
 - a. But please bear in mind that the sign gifts have ceased at this point in redemptive history.
 - b. They were necessary for the church under age before the full and complete

revelation of God's will had been made to us. But since the canon of Scripture was completed, the attesting gifts have ceased, and we have revealed to us now the full mind of God.

- B. All that Remains to Be Seen This Evening Is that to Be Faithful in the Use of These Gifts, You Must Minister Them so that God Receives All the Glory.
1. This is not surprising if it, for all which the Lord has done, He has done ultimately for His own glory? Paul writes, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36).
 2. Peter writes, "Whoever speaks, *let him speak*, as it were, the utterances of God."
 - a. If Peter has primarily the preaching of the Word in view here, then what is meant by it is that the minister of God's Word is not to proclaim his own views, but those of God. And he should be very careful to treat God's Word with all seriousness and reverence.
 - b. Everywhere the phrase "utterances of God" is used in Scripture, it refers to the inspired Word of God.
 - c. Peter is not saying that when the minister speaks, he is speaking God's Word, but he does say that when the minister preaches the Word, he must use it with all of the solemnity which accompanies it. That Word which comes from the mouth of God, which is recorded for us in the Bible, is the most holy of all things, and it must be treated accordingly.
 - d. This of course holds true for anyone who uses the Word of God. It must be treated as holy!
 3. Furthermore, he writes, "Whoever serves, *let him do so* as by the strength which God supplies."
 - a. In serving may be included everything besides preaching. According to Calvin, it can include teaching and every other administration of the church.
 - b. This is not to be done in one's own strength, but in the strength which God supplies.
 - c. Of course all of our strength comes from God. The exhortation then is to recognize that nothing is of our own, but all comes from Him, and He is to receive all the glory.
 4. The bottom line is that "in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."
 - a. We are to be faithful in our efforts to glorify God. Everything else is a secondary consideration.
 - b. The preacher is to preach the Word. If it is well received, good. But if it is not well received, as long as God is glorified in the proclamation of His truth, nothing else matters.
 - c. When you witness to a friend, a neighbor, or a family member, if they receive your testimony and turn to Christ, all praise to God! But if they reject you and the Gospel, God is still glorified through your faithfulness.
 - d. And the same is true in every other administration of his gracious gifts. As long as you are faithful, God will be glorified.
 - e. This is the reason why Christ accomplished the work of Redemption ultimately. He became a man, kept God's Law, and died to atone for the sins of His people, in

order to purchase for them the gift of the Spirit, who would apply the work of Christ to them, sanctify them, and equip them to bring forth the fruits of holiness, so that God would be glorified.

- f. The end in view is the glorification of God through the work of Jesus Christ.
- g. And because Christ has made this possible, and because He is worthy of all praise and honor, Peter writes, “To whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” So be it.
- h. Let us therefore, as we look forward to this year, seek to discern what gifts the Lord has given to us, and put them to their best use for His glory. He has saved us and given us a gift in order to perfect the church of His own dear Son. Let us then, out of gratitude for His mercies received, submit ourselves to His will, pray for His strength and grace, and set our hearts fully to this purpose. May God grant to each of us the will to do so. Amen. So be it!