
a *Grace Notes* course

First Peter

Lesson 8

1 Peter 4:6 to 15

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1 Peter

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1 Peter 4:6 - 15**1 Peter 4:6**

"For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

This verse is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible to interpret. The rules of interpretation that we should keep in mind is that we interpret unclear verses with the clear verses, and the minority of texts with the majority of texts. Neither is this verse clear, nor the majority of texts dealing with this subject.

For this reason

"For" is a term of explanation. Peter is explaining that everyone must give account to God (v.5).

"This reason" means unto this end. For what purpose was the gospel preached? There is a twofold purpose found in this verse:

1. that non-Christians will evaluate Christians as people in the flesh, and
2. that those who accept the gospel will live forever according to God's norms

the gospel was preached also

The tense in the verb "was preached" is most important (aorist tense [one point], indicative mood [actually happened]). Peter deals here with the historic past. He is not saying that the gospel is in the process of being preached to the dead. The preaching took place when these "dead ones" were still amid the living. This is the only time when preaching is effective -- when we are alive physically on earth.

to those who are dead,

There is no verb "are" in this verse. Literally, this phrase would read "to dead ones." They are dead from the viewpoint of the remaining Christians on earth. The dead Christians of verse six had the gospel preached to them while alive on earth (aorist tense; indicative mood). They became Christians while on earth and are now dead. They

heard the gospel while alive and have now passed into eternity before the writing of this epistle. This statement encourages Christians that they have something for which to live beyond this present life.

What is the difference between the "dead" of verse five and verse six? The dead of verse five "will give account" (future tense). Therefore, these persons are spiritually dead, dead in sin. They are eternally out of fellowship with God (Romans 5:12; 6:23; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). The dead of this verse are Christians who have come to Christ and have their sins eternally paid for by the sufferings of Jesus on the cross.

Principle

Christians face an altogether different future than the lost.

Application

Is there a gospel of the second chance? According to this verse--no! There is no second chance. The only time we can come to Christ is when we are alive on earth.

The Bible says that those without Christ are dead while still physically living. They are dead spiritually.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

Are you dead spiritually? Would you like to come alive spiritually? All it takes is trust in Christ's death for your sins to give you eternal life.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

Note that the above passage says that you immediately pass from death (spiritual) into life (eternal) at the moment of belief. Will you now trust what Christ has done for you?

that they might be judged according to men in the flesh,

The judges in this case are non-Christians who hear the gospel and make their negative evaluation of the gospel according to their own set of norms. They judge the Christian according to their own standards. They set up their own norms of evaluating the Christian life and they slander what they see. The impact of this is that all those who malign Christians will themselves face the Judge of all the earth. This is the point of the "for" at the beginning of the verse.

Although these people came fully face to face with the gospel, they rejected it because they measured the gospel by a different scale of values ["according to"]. They rejected the gospel, even though they sufficiently saw its power in the lives of Christians around them.

but live according to God in the spirit

The Greek has a contrast that is not evident in English -- "That they might be judged according to men on the one hand but live according to God in the spirit on the other hand." This deals with a double purpose: that Christians may be judged by non-Christian norms on the one hand and that they may go on living by God's norms on the other hand.

The judgment of men's norms is not the final end of Christians. That is only one side of the story. The other side of the coin is that Christians will live eternally according to God's norms in the spirit. Christians will live according to God's standards in eternity. Christians will live forever after their physical death.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live'" (John 11:25).

Principle

Christians live according to a different set of values than non-Christians.

Application

God will not judge Christians in eternity. Their sins have already been judged by the death of Jesus on the cross. Therefore, God will not condemn Christians (Romans 8:1), because they accepted the gospel while on earth.

Therefore, the Christians live according to a different scale of values. We abide by a different manual. We march according to a different drumbeat. We look at life differently because we have been born from above. We do not live "according to the norms" of the world.

On the other hand, we concur with God "according to the standard of God in the spirit." We do not fit in the herd any more. The Savior spoils us for "living according to the standards of men in the flesh." He spoils the values of the old crowd. We did not give up those values but they gave us up because the Savior gave us soul satisfaction. That satisfaction more than compensates for the fair weather friends we lost when becoming Christians.

1 Peter 4:7

"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers."

Now Peter turns to a new subject--the effectiveness of the believer's life in the middle of suffering (vv. 7-11). Do you have stability under pressure? When disaster comes, do you know how to cope with it?

But the end of all things

Peter now presents a motive for facing trials. He appeals to the "end." The "end" is the limit at which a thing ceases to be what it was up to that point. The "end" here probably refers to maximum disaster coming from Roman persecution in Asia Minor (modern Turkey).

Up to this time, early Christians were relatively free from persecution. But at that point, Nero was out to persecute Christians. He used Christians as bait for wild animals and as subjects to fight gladiators. He also used them as torches to light the streets of Rome. Therefore, this was the end of a period of calm for Christians in Asia Minor.

Peter prepares Christians for a radical change of circumstances. This preparation demands a thorough understanding of God's perspective on

the purpose for suffering. It demands an understanding of prayer.

"All things" is emphatic and refers to the conclusion of this era of history in the first century. The sweep of this statement is awesome. The next thing on God's program for Asia Minor Christians is now at hand.

is at hand

The phrase "is at hand" means approach, come near, to move nearer to a reference point. Peter is talking about the imminent coming persecution on Christians in Asia Minor and uses these words to motivate these believers to hang in there through the suffering they will face.

Some think that this statement by Peter is a claim for the imminent coming of Christ. Immanency means that there is no prophetic event that needs fulfillment before Jesus comes again. He could come at any moment. This is why some think Peter can make the statement that the coming of Christ has drawn near. It is near in the sense of imminence. Although the New Testament teaches this truth elsewhere, the context does not argue for immanency here.

Immanency is not immediacy. Immediacy means that Jesus must come shortly. Immanency means that the coming of Christ could occur at any moment. There is nothing prophetically preventing his coming. The next event in prophetic history looms ready to take place (Romans 13:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 2 Corinthians 5:2; Philippians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; James 5:8; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18; Revelation 1:3).

Jesus may appear at any time. Do you have a constant expectancy of the coming of Christ? That appearing is hastening on. We do not know the hour or day when we shall meet Him. We should live all life in the shadow of eternity.

"At hand" is also a formula for the rapture of the church, this being used as another argument to claim this passage refers to the rapture (Romans 13:11, 12; Philippians 4:5; James 5:8, 9). The rapture is seven years before the second coming. The rapture is an event that may happen any moment. Jesus is right at the door. He may come momentarily. No prediction must be fulfilled before He comes. The signs of the times such as

the Jews going back to Palestine, the apostasy of the church, the increase of violence are all signs of the second coming, not the rapture. It may take place today, tomorrow, or sometime in the twenty-first century. Only God knows.

However, the meaning in this context is the coming persecution of Christians in Asia Minor. This persecution will momentarily come on these Asia Minor Christians. When it comes, Christians must have already prepared themselves for it.

Principle

God wants Christians to be prepared for disaster.

Application

If this verse refers to the rapture, God wants us to live in constant expectancy of Christ's return. None of us know whether we will live to see the end.

Since this verse probably refers to coming persecution, the meaning is that Christians will come to the end of calm in their lives. Each Christian will face maximum disaster situations at least a few times in his or her life. God wants us to prepare ourselves for coming disaster. Each of us will face stark situations in life. None of us will get through life without severe problems.

Peter's point is preparation. Are you prepared for trial when it comes? If you wait till trial comes to prepare yourself, it will be too late. Under major duress we do not think clearly. We cannot learn properly when emotionally upset. Therefore, we must prepare our souls before trial comes. Do you know enough principles of God's Word to face the bad times when they come?

therefore

"Therefore" draws an inference to the phrase "the end of all things is at hand." Because of the coming crisis, Christians are to follow the following seven directives (vv. 11-17). These are as binding on the child of God as "you shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13).

The Holy Spirit sets forth these commands in light of the immanency of the dire situation these Asia Minor Christians were about to face. They were to lay these things to heart. The "therefore" is the verbal link between the seven exhortations that

follow and the pressure the Asia Minor Christians are going to encounter.

Principle

We need to operate on divine directives during duress.

Application

It matters how we think under pressure. The Word of God will mold and direct our thinking. As the Spirit of God deposits truth in our mind, our thinking will change (2 Corinthians 3:18) and God will progressively transform us. Eventually the Lord of glory will dominate our entire thinking apparatus. He is Lord of the mind (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Our head is usually the last citadel to capitulate to the sovereign Lord. "I know better. I am too wise. I am too smart. It doesn't stand to reason..." This is a proud head. We are too top heavy (2 Corinthians). In 2 Corinthians 11:3 Eve wanted to be smarter, more brilliant and clever. We can corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ.

If we do not operate on the principles of the Word, we will fail miserably under trial. We must use the resources of God's Word. Many of us run to some friend for sympathy. If we depend on a sympathetic ear, we will not learn to pipe the Word into our soul in times of disaster.

People who attend churches that do not teach the Word but operate on entertainment and social life will end in tragedy. People indifferent toward the Word will not cope in times of deep trouble. Social life does not carry us through disaster. In times of disaster, we do not think in terms of musical chairs! If we are mature the thing we remember is what God says about suffering. No incubator Christian living will carry us.

be serious

"Serious" comes from two words: to keep safe and mind. This is a term of mental health -- to be in our right mind, to be reasonable, sensible and serious, to keep our head, to be temperate and discreet, to show self-control, to come to our senses, to learn self-control. Peter says in effect,

"Preserve your sanity. Keep things in their proper proportion."

This is what is important while under duress. "Guard your mind." God expects us to stabilize our thought pattern. Why should Christians get upset and fall apart when trial comes?

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

Peter wants us to keep our minds safe, to preserve our sanity. A great attribute of sanity is that it sees things in proper balance. It sees what is important and what is not. It is not impulsive and capricious. It is not subject to fanaticism nor indifference. It sees the circumstances of time in the light of eternity. Circumstance finds its importance in the light of eternal values. When God gives us this perspective, all things take proper place in our thinking.

"Serious" signifies alertness (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5; 1 Peter 1:13). Metaphorically, it does not in itself imply watchfulness, but is used in association with it to mean thinking soberly. Christians are to be clear in their thinking about how to live the Christian life. God wants our minds stayed and solid. Such a mind restricts excesses from coming into our lives.

"Be serious" is an urgent command. It demands that we deal decisively with our instability, without panicking. The person who is never at rest does not do much praying. Stability comes from orientation to the plan of God. When we keep balance in our thought life we are not flighty and carried away by distorted thinking or by attacks from people.

The idea is that God wants us to have a life free from frivolous and irresponsible living. We take life seriously. We understand the consequences of our decisions for time and eternity. We know the impact of our decisions on self and others and take a responsible approach to life. We do not abandon ourselves to such excitement that we lose self-control. We cultivate spiritual calmness.

Principle

God wants us to establish balance in times of disaster.

Application

Christians should have stability in their thinking. Do you keep your thinking stable in times of trouble? It is very easy to allow some disaster to cause a wide variety in the consistency of our thinking. Our thinking determines how well we live the Christian life.

The Christian life comes down to what we think. Mental attitude sins such as bitterness, antagonism, fear, worry, anxiety, jealousy or a guilt complex will destroy our stability. We need this stability before we enter the storm. If we enter suffering conditions without stability, we will crack up mentally.

We need something greater than ourselves to face disaster conditions. This greater thinking reflects upon the Word of God and His providential care for us. The more of the Word we get into our orientation toward life, the more stable we will be. We will have greater capacity to deal with whatever we face. As you move into the storms of life, we need to have the Word firmly lodged in your thinking patterns. This will give us the stability we need in the trials of life.

Some Christians enter psychotic or neurotic dimensions even without being under heavy duress. If we buckle under the charge of the mosquito, how will we handle the charge of the elephant? How we handle the former will determine how we handle the latter. In principle, the elephant should go down the same way as the mosquito. It is when we are in the normal experiences of life that we need to learn how to cope with mosquito issues. We cannot depend on other people to help us. This is something that we must learn for ourselves.

Do you approach life frivolously and irresponsibly? Do you take life seriously? We should keep the importance of eternal issues before us at all times. We need to be aware of the consequences of our actions both for time and eternity. We need to be aware of the effects of our actions on ourselves and on others.

and watchful

The word "watchful" means self-controlled, dispassionate (1:13; 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8; 2 Timothy 4:5). God expects those under suffering

to be spiritually alert, vigilant, on guard. He wants us to be in control under any circumstance. A person on guard can be calm and collected when difficult times come. Keep your cool when things go haywire.

The New Testament used "watchful" as an antonym of drunkenness. Drunkenness means that we are not in control of our mind or thought processes. A characteristic of true character is self-control.

God expects us to behave with restraint and moderation, not permitting excesses. He wants believers to have sobriety of thought that avoids excesses in passion, rashness or confusion. "Do not be intoxicated with anxiety, care and pleasures. Be calm and collected. Don't always be on a tear worrying about this or that" is this message to us. Everybody needs self-discipline. We need it for school. We need it in business. We need it in prayer.

Even though the Lord warned Peter, James and John not to fall asleep, they doze off in spite of what He said. He woke them up and yet they fell asleep again. Three times this happened.

"Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'" (Matthew 26:40-41).

Principle

Effective prayer takes self-discipline.

Application

Do you have a calm, sober disposition and self-discipline fit for prayer?

Watch that you do not fall asleep in prayer. Look out, lest your mind wanders from conscious contact with the Lord. The Devil will cause our minds to wander. We will think about a dozen different things rather than truly pray. Ten minutes will pass and we will think we have prayed but all we will have done is let our minds wander.

If our sin capacity is increasing we will have no interest to pray. Peter, who wrote this epistle, knew all about this (Matthew 26:41). He did not watch and pray. He slept and prayed!

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1).

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

in your prayers

This is the third reference to prayer in 1 Peter (3:7, 12). "Prayers" is in the plural and refers to both the quantity and quality of our prayer life. We need balance and vigilance in every prayer situation and in every kind of prayer.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

In the Greek "in" connotes "with a view to." Carry out the above commands with a view to your prayer life. The first issue of prayer is the desire not to get what we wish, but to discover the will of God. If we fulfill the seven commands of verses 7-11, God will answer prayer. A calm and collected spirit and self-discipline facilitate our prayer life. If we do not have a capacity for self-restraint in our mentality, it will be difficult to pray.

When we have qualities of seriousness of mind and self-control in prayer, we can face trial properly. If we employ these two qualities, this will help us to pray. Christians need to know how to restrain themselves, to rein themselves in and operate in an orderly manner. God wants us to be apt to pray. A calm and collected attitude enables us to be more effective in our prayer life.

Sober prayer stands in striking contrast to the frenzied prayer of pagan worship of the first century. This is the opposite of the undue excitement or mania prayers of those who do not base their prayers on the finished work of Christ.

"Not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come" (2 Thessalonians 2:2).

Principle

Stability of mind is necessary for effective prayer.

Application

Christians always on the race do not pray much. We need sobriety and self-discipline in prayer. Are you self-disciplined in prayer? When people succumb to pressure, they no longer concentrate. Hysteria indicates a lack of concentration and discipline. Stability of mind is absolutely necessary for your prayer life. Prayer takes concentration. Unless we can pray under pressure, we will not pray properly.

Are you sleepy in your prayer life? Dullness prevents dynamic prayer. If we fulfill the two commands of this verse, we create an environment conducive to answered prayer. God wants us to keep an inner steadiness while in prayer. Keep your heads. It is difficult to get through to the presence of God if we try to force our way through a crowd of anxious thoughts and sinful desires. We will rise from our knees disappointed and frustrated every time. We will say prayers but not pray.

Apathy, sluggishness, lethargy prevent dynamic prayer. Peter slept when he should have prayed. Peter was filled with anxiety and confusion in the Garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers arrested Jesus. Lacking sane judgment, he grabbed a sword and cut off the ear of a slave. This is not how we are to handle pressure under duress.

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

When we have an unbalanced mind, we cannot pray as we could otherwise. If our approach to life is selfish and irresponsible, we cannot pray as we ought. We do not know what to ask. We ask for the wrong things, because our priorities are wrong. The first priority of prayer is that we discover God's will for our lives, not that we beg to get what we want.

Do you have an aversion for prayer? Aversion to prayer is bizarre, since prayer is a great promise and opportunity provided by God. We make a great mistake if we think that spiritual business will compensate for lack of communion with God. A full prayer life is a powerful life.

All of us do not have the same amount of money but we all have the same amount of time. We all have equal opportunity to pray.

1 Peter 4:8

"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.'"

And above all things

The phrase "above all things" gives love first priority above all other virtues. We see the priority of love in other passages such as these:

"And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14).

Love is the most important virtue (John 13:34; 1 John 4:7-8; 3:14) and is indispensable for Christian relationships. Sacrificial love is of first importance in living out our relationship to others.

Love is more than simple emotional affection but a divine capacity to sacrifice self for others. This kind of love is at the very essence of the love of God (John 3:16). The very essence of God is love (1 John 4:8) for God loves us with an everlasting, unconditional love. God loves without limit. Such love manifests itself in unlimited sacrifice for others.

"And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Ephesians 5:22).

Principle

Sacrificial love deserves the highest priority among Christian virtues.

Application

Sacrificial love is the pre-eminent virtue of the Christian life and is a prerequisite to all other virtues of the Christian life. Three great apostles agree that love is the highest virtue:

Paul said that Love was the greatest virtue (1 Corinthians 13:13; Romans 13:8). John said the same thing (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:23). Peter here in this passage.

All three apostles agree that love is the supreme qualification of character for the Christian. Love makes all other virtues of the Christian life what they should be. Love is a prerequisite to any Christian activity. Our love to God will show itself in sacrificial love for fellow Christians (1 John 3:17).

Show me electricity without energy and I will show you a faith that does not produce the love of God. Show me fire without heat, then I will show you a faith that does not express itself in sacrifice for other Christians. As the sun shines its light so must a person who has come to Christ shine his love to others.

have fervent love

The word "have" in the Greek carries the idea of "keep on having." "Fervent" love should be not sporadic or occasional. God's desire is for us to unceasingly love with perseverance. God wants us to be eager to preserve our love in a warm environment. The idea is to keep love constant.

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1).

The word "fervent" denotes strained, stretched, eager, earnest; hence, metaphorically, "fervent." This is an adjective of intensity. Have intense love for others.

The Greek used "fervent" for the taut muscles of an athlete who strains every ounce of energy to win a race. In the 100 yard dash the runner strains and stretches his body to stretch across the tape first. This love is intent, earnest and will extend oneself to the limit for others. Do you exert yourself for others? Do you go out of your way to help others? You say, "Yes, if it is convenient." However, this love has a quality of fervor that sacrifices self for another person's welfare.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13).

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16).

This love is the opposite of self-centered love. Sacrificial love gives self to others. We will exert every effort and go to the limit of our strength to love others properly. This love is not sentimental, sloppy emotion but demands the best of our spiritual sinew. It means loving the unlovely, unloving and unlovable. This love is not easy but will love in the face of insult and injury. We will love when someone does not return love. We love even when love is spurned.

This kind of strenuously sustained love is not blind but recognizes and understands the faults of others (Proverbs 10:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

for one another,

Peter does not say "Have fervent love for those without Christ" but for "one another" as Christians.

Principle

Christian love requires muscle and sinew.

Application

It is not good enough for Christians to stop rendering malice toward other Christians. Sacrificial love goes far beyond the negative. Positive, sacrificial love intensely loves other Christians. We spare no effort to make sure we love Christians.

Do you keep your love at the boiling point? Do you have an ardent love? This love is not easy. It takes effort to love properly. True love is not sentimental, sloppy emotion but exerts itself to the limit of its strength. This love demands our greatest effort. The Christian loves as an athlete who strains every muscle to reach his goal. This means he will love the unlovely. He will love in the face of insult and injury. He loves when no love is returned.

The Christians of Asia Minor were about to face a storm from the Roman government. They needed to keep short accounts in their relationships. When we face personal the personal storm of suffering, we need to be free from attitude sins. We want to rig our attitudes for the storm. If we do not batten down our hatch and free ourselves from attitude sins, the storms of suffering will sink our ship. We will not be able to face disaster when it comes

because we are out of accord with those closest to us.

What we are like on the inside determines how well we will do when disaster comes. For example, people with attitude sins tie themselves up in knots thinking about their guilt. If we keep all the hatches and port holes open when we enter suffering, we will sink our spiritual ship.

Have you properly rigged yourself for spiritual storms? Do you have a hole below the water line of your spiritual ship? If you harbor attitude sins, you will not be prepared for the storm. You will sink under the storm.

for 'love will cover a multitude of sins'

"Cover" carries the idea of concealing, veiling, covering over. God expects us to conceal the sin of others so that no one can see a trace of their sin. This is not our own personal sin but the sin of our fellow Christian!

Fervent love orients us to forgive and forget wrongs committed against us. We readily cover their sin against us. We will not aggravate the wrong by spreading gossip around the Christian community. When we do not publish the failings of others, we eliminate a lot of gossip. Gossip does not love; it hurts others. True love does not hint at past failure.

"Multitude of sins" indicates a mass of sins that has come to the notice of a particular Christian because of some special personal contact with the perpetrator. Do you have some unique association with someone out of the loop with God? This passage forms a principle for how to deal with such people.

"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20).

The phrase "love will cover a multitude of sins" is a quote from Proverbs 10:12,

"Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins."

Principle

Sacrificial love protects the reputation of fallen Christians.

Application

True love is blind to the faults of others. Do you drag the problems of your fellow Christians into the open so that all can see? This will not build a bond between you and them. It will also hurt their reputation. By protecting fallen Christians and seeing them as Christ sees them, we encourage one another and strengthen each other.

Some of us think that God commissioned us to expose the sin of others. Instead of covering their sin, we advertise their sin. There is a sadistic glee in this. A true family protects its own. They cover up for their loved ones because they love each other. This is a missing element in the church of the living God--co-dependency notwithstanding. Co-dependency means that we enable our loved ones to continue with their problem, such as alcoholism by covering it up. Refusing to make a spectacle of a loved one is not co-dependency. It is not a panacea.

We hold little interest in covering the sins of fellow Christians. We have great interest in covering our own sins. We would rather cover our sins than confess them (1 John 1:9). God wants us to make a clean-cut break with sin. If we rationalize our sin away, we will not deal with our personal sin. This is like alcoholics who will not admit they are alcoholics. They will not address their alcoholism until they admit that alcohol controls their life. We will not address the sin of our lives until we confess our sin. Our natural tendency is to cover our personal sin and expose the sins of others.

An environment of love among Christians helps sustain believers under persecution. Love cannot endure indifference. All of us need to be wanted and understood. Hate does the opposite. Some people snoop about in order to find some sin in someone else and then broadcast it over their personal network. They may even exaggerate the sin and gloat over it.

We often slight Christians who fail. We eliminate a lot of gossip when we cover the sin of fellow Christians. A gossip does not truly love others. If we ask someone to spread feathers around the neighborhood and go pick them up a week later, this would be an impossible task. It is also an

impossible task to retrieve gossip spread around the community.

Love forgets as well as forgives. Love does not keep hinting at past failures. Love is willing to hide the sin of others in an anonymous grave. Who is without fault? If we attack others, this implies that we are innocent of sin.

Covering the sins of others, on the other hand, does not imply that we condone their sin (Proverbs 28:13). We should deal with public sin publicly and we should deal with private sin privately. Nor does covering sin imply that Christians not confront their sin.

Do you have a passion for bringing stray believers back to fellowship with God? Do you love people as they are, faults and all? Or would you rather proclaim their failures from the housetop?

1 Peter 4:9

"Be hospitable to one another without grumbling."

We come to the fourth directive of chapter 4, verses 7-11.

Be hospitable

"Be hospitable" means to be friendly to strangers or guests (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). A "stranger" is someone who is not regarded as a member of the extended family or a close friend. Strangeness produces mutual tension between natives and foreigners but hospitality overcomes the tension and makes friends of aliens.

"Hospitality" is not entertainment or an attempt to amuse people who do not need it. The idea is not that of showing hospitality to people who require help. Hospitality was usually extended to travelers and strangers.

Times of persecution and distress obligated Christians to be hospitable to one another. Some Christians lost everything they owned and were driven to distant countries for safety. This hospitality sustained people uprooted by persecution. Many of their homes were ravaged and burned. Parents were taken away into the great slave market of the Roman Empire. Children were often slaughtered.

Love--love given in return for love--was pragmatically important to these ravaged Christians who escaped from this treatment. Hospitality enabled these desolate Christians to relocate, to establish new businesses, to find work and to assist them on their travel. In the first century there were very few Motel 6's or Holiday Inns. Those that did exist were places of prostitution. Hospitality became an important means of dealing with a number of issues for the church in that day.

"Hospitality" became a customary means of Christian living in the first century: Acts 16:15; Philemon 22; Matthew 10:9-13; Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Timothy 3:2; Romans 12:12-14; Philippians 2:14; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2.

Hospitality is a manifestation of the love of the previous verse. Hebrews makes the connection between love and hospitality.

"Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:1-2).

Traveling ministers also required this service in order to spread the gospel around the Roman Empire. Thus, hospitality was crucial for strategic transmission of the gospel. God strategically used those with the gift of hospitality. Can we use this gift strategically today?

Hospitality was also used for evangelism. By inviting non-Christians into their homes, Christians could demonstrate the reality of their life in Christ.

Principle

If we have room for people in our heart we will have room for them in our home as well.

Application

Our attitude toward hospitality should be this: if we have freely received from God we ought to freely give to others.

Hospitality gives a great opportunity for us to share our life experiences and personal history with others. This places us in close social contact with others. For non-Christians to value

Christianity they need to see it up close in the life and behavior of a Christian of authenticity.

One of the best strategies for evangelism in our day is evangelistic home Bible studies or simple evangelistic parties. In this way non-Christians can get up close and personal. They can see the reality of Christ in our lives. We live in a transient world where people have very few roots or friends. People move regularly. The ability to establish lasting friendships is not very great in our society.

Hospitality also enriches the Christian. It will expand our fellowship and understanding of the dynamics of Jesus Christ in the lives of other people.

to one another

"To one another" means to others of the same kind. This means that believers are to give hospitality to fellow believers. If Christians do not treat each other well, we surely will not treat those without Christ very well.

"Distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13).

"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2).

Think of entertaining an angel. Angels usually appear as men, not women, in the Bible. "Angels" means messengers. It may be that these messengers were those who were spreading the Gospel around the world.

Principle

If Christians do not treat each other well, we surely will not treat those without Christ very well.

Application

God expects Christians to give to Christians. Selflessness is at the core of the character of Christianity. Jesus established this model.

This is the complete opposite of the philosophy of the world.. The world's philosophy is "me first," "the survival of the fittest," "the law of the jungle," "might makes right." That is not Christian. We think that if we say that we are number one loud enough and long enough people will believe it.

When Christians conflict with each other, we accentuate emotions of distrust, hatred and fear. In

this we lose sight of our true goals and turn to focus on undermining each other. Strife on football teams ruins many great teams. Our true goal is to live and share the wonder of the glorious gospel of our wonderful Lord and glorify God with this.

A great accusation against many churches is that they are not friendly. They are like country clubs that exercise discrimination. If you are not the right color, or do not dress properly, or are not from the right strata of society, they give you a cold shoulder. "I will not attend there again. They are not friendly." Do people say that about your relationships?

Sometimes teens are clannish and catty. If you do not look like them and dress as sharp as they do, they will cut you dead. This is non-Christian.

without grumbling

"Grumbling" means to mutter, murmur, speak secretly. The idea is to express one's discontent, to complain and murmur as a sign of displeasure. The way we carry out hospitality is important. We are to do it without complaint. A person who is hospitality-oriented does not mutter or grumble at the expense and inconvenience. It is one thing to be hospitable and it is something else to give hospitality with cheer.

"Murmur" is an onomatopoeic word representing the significance by the sound of the word. The meaning is to say anything in a low tone as in the word "murmur" itself. "Murmur" was used for the cooing of doves and means low muttering, especially of discontent.

"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution" (Acts 6:1).

"Do all things without complaining and disputing" (Philippians 2:14).

The papyri (secular manuscripts) used "murmur" of the murmuring of a gang of workmen. Also the papyri used this term of the Romans murmuring while the Emperor (late 2nd century A.D.) was interviewing a rebel.

Israel spoke against God with a complaining mentality,

"And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me" (Numbers 14:26-27).

"Murmur" is a term of rebellion. "OK, God, I will do it, but I am revolting on the inside." These statements reveal our rebellion against our lot in life. "Why do they always call on me to..." "I do not have the money to entertain." Such grumbling is protest against God. It is a cancerous attitude that has selfishness at its core. Selfishness pushes out love. Are you a person who only "gets" but does not "give?"

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Principle

Complaint is a manifestation of discontent toward our lot in life.

Application

Grumbling does not encourage Christians nor show gratitude to God. It is a complaint against satisfaction with how God made our lot in life.

When we complain we assail the providence of God. "God, give me my desires but do not inconvenience me with having to deal with the problems of people." God wants us to do this with more than just an outward smile of apparent pleasure to serve others. No, his desire is that we serve others with a smile of the heart.

Do not give with a grudging attitude. If we do, we lose the blessing. When we use our car, house, finances for God, God will bless us. Do you serve out of a sense of duty? Do you complain because someone asked you to give to others?

1 Peter 4:10

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

As each one has received a gift,

"As" means to the degree that we received our gift. "As" sets up an analogy between the grace of how we received our gift and the grace of how we are to minister the gift. It is by grace we received the

gift and it is by grace that we use the gift. We serve God because God gives, not because we earn the right to be used of God. God gave us our gift entirely by grace and we minister it entirely by grace.

"Each one" indicates that every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. God excludes no one in the distribution of gifts to the body of Christ. We receive these special supernatural endowments at our salvation (1 Corinthians 12:11-13). Spiritual gifts enable the body of Christ to function as a whole (1 Corinthians 12:15, 21). All spiritual gifts must operate in the environment of love (1 Corinthians 13). We should give greatest priority to the gifts that relate to maturity (1 Corinthians 14).

Each of us "received" the gift. We did not work for it. We did not earn it. God gave it to us with no strings attached. Everything that we have, God donated to us. Therefore, there is no ground for bragging. What do we have to brag about?

What did we do to get the gift? Nothing. It was a donation. How did we "receive" our gift? By grace. We do not get this gift by some super sacrifice, by working for it, by hustling for it, by living a clean life or by agonizing in the closet. Since we did nothing to acquire our spiritual gift, we should minister it in grace.

"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

This use of the word "gift" is the only occurrence outside the writings of Paul. A spiritual "gift" is a special, supernatural bestowing of a special capacity to serve the body of Christ or reach those without Christ. It is a special, supernatural endowment by the Holy Spirit to do the work of God (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10).

The word "gift" is derived from the same root as "grace," denoting something freely given, a favor bestowed. A gift is the capacity to benefit the body of Christ. Christians cannot claim that this capacity came from themselves. They cannot claim to produce this gift because it was a grace

given by God. Our gifts belong to God, to be used for His purpose.

Two chapters in the New Testament catalog the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Romans 12 catalogs 7 gifts and 1 Corinthians 12 catalogs 11 gifts. Some gifts are duplications. Eliminating duplications there are 14 distinct gifts in those two chapters. In total, there are over 20 gifts when we consider all the gifts of the New Testament.

Principle

We exercise our gift in grace because we received our gift by grace.

Application

God does not want us to be ambivalent about the gifts He gives us. In fact, He warns us not to neglect our gifts:

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership" (1 Timothy 4:14).

Some of us may not feel gifted but nevertheless God has gifted us. We may not have a public gift or a sensational gift but we have a gift. Paul tells us to activate our latent gifts. Our gift will not function without animating it. In order to discover what our gift is, we must read the label on the gift to see if God addresses the gift to us.

"Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

If someone were to give us a gift at Christmas and we threw it in the attic without opening it, it would be an insult to the giver. If Christians receive special supernatural endowments to do the work of God and leave them latent, this is an insult to God who gave the gift. God gave every Christian a special endowment to do His work without exception.

Will you stand at the judgment seat of Christ empty-handed with no representation of using our gift responsibly? It will do no good to say, "Well, I'm not talented. I really do not have anything to offer the church. I am a speckled bird that does not fit in. I can't do anything. All I can do is sit. All I can do is be a religious spectator all my life. I watch others serve. All I can do is pity myself."

Neglecting our gift indicates our lack of appreciation for the grace of God. Very few Christians seize their gifts and use them for God's glory to the benefit of the body of Christ. Never did so many owe so much to so few.

minister it

"Minister" signifies to be a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon, minister. The New Testament uses this term in connection with official service in a local church, "they that have served (well) as deacons" (1 Timothy 3:13).

"But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless" (1 Timothy 3:10).

"Minister" is used of believers who serve one another in various ways. "Minister" is service:

"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matthew 25:21).

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

to one another

"To one another" has to do with ministering to each other. Verses eight and nine also emphasize the reciprocal relationship of fellow Christians.

Peter throws forward the phrase "to one another" in this sentence. This emphasizes the object of the gift. Our gifts are for others, not self. Gifts are not to terminate in selfish gratification. Our gift is from God and for others.

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption" (Acts 13:36).

What a tribute to a man's life! The summary of David's life is that he served his generation by the will of God.

Principle

Gifts serve no purpose except to serve.

Application

Each gift is a pipe that relays the blessing for which God designed the gift. We are a pipe, not a reservoir. We are a channel of God's blessing to others. We are the channel through which God's blessing flows to others.

The idea of "minister" is that we are to use our gift. Get with using this gift for the glory of God.

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first" (Revelation 2:19).

"And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward" (Hebrews 3:5).

Jesus ministered by serving:

"Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant... "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26, 28).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Do you willing serve the body of Christ?

as good stewards

God not only asks us to be a steward but a "good" steward. "Good" emphasizes quality. God wants us to use the stewardship of our gift in a qualitative way. First Timothy 4:6 says that we are to be a "good minister" and Second Timothy 2:3 urges us to be "good soldiers."

In the first century, land owners placed stewards over great estates. These stewards were slaves captured from other parts of the world. Often these slaves were the leaders of their countries or business types. A "steward" was first a manager of a household or estate.

The owner of the estate held the steward accountable to faithfully fulfill the trust committed to him. The owner put his goods and property into the steward's hands. God wants us to faithfully administer our gift like a manager of an estate. A steward is one to whom God entrusts certain property. Joseph of the Old Testament was a trustee of Pharaoh's goods. God placed us as a trustee of our gift.

"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

God uses "steward" of the leader of a local congregation.

"For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money" (Titus 1:7).

Principle

Christians are managers of God's grace through their gift.

Application

God wants us to be faithful, not famous. He does not even want us to be successful but faithful.

"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Stewards serve others by distributing their gift to meet the needs of others. A good steward manages God's provisions well. As a minister of Christ, God entrusts us with the treasures of the gospel. The first requirement is trustworthiness.

What kind of steward have you been with God's gifts to you? Have you opened your gift? Have you neglected your gift? Do you use your gifts to serve others? There is room for everyone in the service of the King.

of the manifold grace of God

"Manifold" means various kinds, diversified. Originally it meant many-colored, variegated and was used of spotted leopards or fawns. God's grace shows itself in many divers manifestations. God also gives great variety in the gifts he bestows on the church. God uses various means by which we can serve him (Romans 12:3-8). God makes His church multi-faceted.

God gives the Christian the responsibility to manage the many-faceted graces of God to the body of Christ. The Christian's gift is itself a grace from God and everything that it yields represents

God's grace. Since God gave us the gift we cannot claim merit for it. No gift belongs to us. It belongs to God and we must use it in God's interest. Every use of God's gift must manifest God's grace, not our merit.

Principle

God's gifts of grace come in all sizes and shapes.

Application

The grace of God comes in all colors, shapes and sizes. It takes a great variety of gifts to produce a healthy, growing church. Our computer has outward functions but below the surface are many little parts that make it work. You may be one of those small parts. Without you there would be no effective church of God. That is the way God works. The church needs big parts and little parts, big roles and little roles without which the church would not be the church.

Will you make yourself available to be used of God in the local church? Without you, the work of the Lord will suffer loss. We ultimately do not serve the church but we serve the Lord.

Say to the Lord, "Here I am. Harness me. Put a saddle on me and I will do my best." All He expects is our best, nothing more. All He wants from us is to do what we can with what we have.

1 Peter 4:11

"If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Verse 11 presents two types of gifts:

- 1) speech gifts and
- 2) action gifts.

This verse shows us how to glorify God with our gifts.

If anyone speaks

"Speaks" here refers to the act of speaking rather than the content of what is said (John 12:49-50; Romans 3:19; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Sometimes "speaks" refers to utterance as opposed to silence. It is a spiritual gift of communication.

Principle

God gives us the gift of dispensing revelation.

Application

God expects us to dispense truth like a mother who coaxes and makes palatable God's Word.

God has a great pantry of truth. We do not stock our own message. We proclaim a message out of the goods of God. The message is not our own. We are just messengers who deliver the telegraph of good news. We do not say a messenger is great because of the good news in the telegram. The glory is in the content of the telegram.

Men are simply mouth-pieces for communicating God's truth. We do not trust in our own powers but live under a power not our own.

let him speak as the oracles of God

"Speak" means oral presentation.

"As" means manner. The manner of our speaking should represent the Bible. God expects us to speak God's Word with conviction and a sense of awe. Our presentation should display earnestness and humility because we speak God's holy Word (2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). We are the mouthpieces of God. What we speak we speak from God's Word. These are statements from the mouth of God.

The word "oracles" means a short saying or pronouncement. It was used of a saying originating from a divinity. Originally this term meant an oracular utterance of heathen deities. Pagans used "oracles" for a saying that came from their gods.

In Christianity "oracles" came to mean divine revelation. Acts 7:38 uses "oracles" of revelations received by Moses. Romans 3:2 uses this term for God's promises. In this verse the use is of Christian gifts with special supernatural capacity to serve God with words. We pronounce the content of God's truth.

The person who speaks the "oracles" of God does not speak his own opinion or propagate his own prejudice. He makes sure his message is from God. Speaking gifts require Bible study. We must ask for illumination so that we can confidently proclaim the Word of God.

The phrase "as the oracles of God" precedes "speaks" in the Greek text making the phrase emphatic. We do not trust our own powers of speech. We do not seek applause for self by our ability to communicate. We possess power beyond self. We speak with the authority of one who knows God's Word.

We suffer from humility in the wrong place today. Today people speak the Word of God with timidity. We remove humility from motivation and put it into the domain of conviction where it was never meant to be. We may doubt ourselves but we cannot doubt God's Word if we are to present it with conviction. We are on the path to producing a batch of Christians too timid to believe the multiplication table!

Principle

To speak as an oracle of God is to speak with authority.

Application

Do you speak the Word of God with conviction?

Anyone who "speaks" the "oracles" of God dispenses revelation to others. We do not seek to please men when we speak God's Word. We speak the truth unabashedly. John the Baptist is an example of one who was not a weather-vane but a guidepost who gave clear direction. Neither was there anything mousy about the way Jesus spoke. That is why they said, "Never man spoke like this man."

Today we have a finished Bible completely written for our edification. The unabridged, exhaustive edition of the Bible is the foundation for everything we believe. All our convictions are within the confines of this Book.

God will use His Word (Isaiah 55:11). God does not promise to use an outline or a sermon or a lecture. He has promised to use His truth. Do you depend on oratory and logic? Depend on His Word and He will bless your ministry. Preach the Word and leave the results to Him.

Speaking as the oracles of God is expository preaching (Nehemiah 8:8). When we expound Scripture, we can speak with authority. This is what God says, chapter and verse. If you want to argue, argue with the Bible. The beauty of

expository preaching is that verse 2 follows verse 1. No one can accuse us of preparing messages for specific individuals.

Do you speak God's Word or are you a purveyor of your own notions? In speaking gifts, God designs that we transmit His truth. We simply chime the truth and the Holy Spirit does the work of applying truth to experience.

If anyone ministers

"Ministers" signifies to be a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon, minister. This is a serving gift. As we depend on the Lord to speak God's truth accurately by receiving illumination so we depend on the Lord to serve others. When we serve, the life of Christ in us edifies others. We do not do this with natural strength.

"Ministers" refers to all forms of ministry other than speaking ministry--all acts of ministry.

Principle

A characteristic of Christianity is to serve others.

Application

Do you have a ministry to God's people (Hebrews 6:10)? Few of us minister to saints. Most of us cater to our own needs. We love to minister to ourselves.

let him do it as with the ability

"Ability" indicating strength afforded by power. Our ministry springs from the power of God. This is a person who already possesses strength and can put it into action.

"Ability" is endowed power. This is a power that is not our own. It is a power bestowed upon us. This may refer to the filling of the Holy Spirit. God makes effective and authentic what we do by the power of the Spirit. We do what we do in the power of God. It is a power God gives as a possession.

The book of Revelation ascribes this power to God denoting might, strength, power. Ephesians 1:19 refers to His mighty power, i.e., power (over external things) exercised by strength.

Principle

God will give us the ability to minister.

Application

God will enlarge our capacity to serve Him. He first gives us the capability to minister by giving us a gift. Then as we cultivate the gift, He makes us more potent. If we are faithful to our gift, God will enlarge our area of responsibility. He will push back horizons for greater ministry.

Are you dying of spiritual dry rot? If God opens an opportunity for you, seize the day no matter how insignificant it may seem. If you are faithful in the small thing He will give you something greater (Matthew 25:21). God has his own system of promotion and demotion. God will take you from an untrained, unequipped background and use you mightily. All He asks is that you are willing. God looks at the heart.

You may not have eight cylinders; you may have only four. God will use those four cylinders for His own glory. No college can gift people for ministry. That is God's prerogative. The school can only develop the gift that is already there. It cannot supply the gift. It is God who gives the ability (Zechariah 4:6).

which God supplies

"Supplies" is a more powerful term than the idea "gives." We get our English word "chorus" from the Greek term. "Supplies" is a term for someone who pays the expenses of putting a play on stage.

In ancient Greece a philanthropist would pay the expenses for the chorus. So "supplies" came to mean to defray the cost of bringing out a chorus at the public feasts. Usually some wealthy person paid the expenses of a chorus for the performance of a drama. The drama was a very expensive operation. In Athens wealthy citizens bore the burden for the expenses of the Greek dramas.

The idea of this word came to mean to furnish abundantly with a thing. Sometimes this word was used for the supplies of war. The point here is that God liberally gives for our good (2 Corinthians 9:10; James 1:5). Here God is the philanthropist. God will foot the bill and defray any expense when it comes to ministry. God is a God of grace when we exercise our gifts.

God will give extensively from his grace apart from any human merit. He is a liberal Giver (2

Corinthians 9:10; James 1:5). God will make available whatever is needed for ministry. He will provide for our needs for ministry.

Principle

God supplies any provision we need to minister for Him.

Application

We do not invent our gift. God both gives the gift and produces the ability to use the gift. God is both the source of our gift and the sustaining of it.

We often act as if it is our great gift that produces the results. We forget that God both gave us the gift and gives us the ability to use the gift (1 Corinthians 4:7). There is no room for pride because from beginning to end it is God that supplies.

that in all things God may be glorified

"That" indicates a purpose clause. This phrase expresses the ultimate purpose of God for creation. The aim of everything is to give glory to God (2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Philippians 2:11). Purpose gives meaning to our ministry. Because God is the source of grace, we give Him glory with the exercise of our gifts.

"Glorify" means to speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor--to praise. We attribute high status to God by honoring Him (John 5:23).

"Glorified" is in the present tense. God will keep on glorifying Himself through our spiritual gifts. God's glory is the standard by which we measure the quality of our service. We serve in such a way as to give glory to God.

through Jesus Christ

"Through" indicates that Jesus is the instrument by which God glorifies Himself, not us. God gives glory to Himself through Christ in three doxologies--Romans 16:27; Jude 25--and in this verse. Glory is given to Christ in Romans 16:27; Revelation 1:6; 5:13; 7:10; 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 13:21.

Principle

Our purpose in life is to manifest God's glory.

Application

Use of our gifts is a combination of self-possession and self-abandonment. We should exercise our gift with a sense of excellence and yet the gift should not call attention to ourselves. The focus should be upon the Lord Jesus.

Excellence is the result of knowledge, conviction and thorough preparation. Self-abandonment is the result of placing our confidence in God. Self-possession without self-abandonment will call attention to self. Self-possession with self-abandonment will call attention to God.

Humility is the recognition that we are what we are because of God (Romans 12:3). It is a proper evaluation of our place in the program of God's providence, no higher, no lower. When they asked John the Baptist who he was, he said "I am a voice." He was no more and no less than a voice. We are who we are by God's grace.

Do you live a life of doxology? All doxologies ascribe glory to God (Ephesians 3:20-21; Jude 24-25; Galatians 1:23-24; Psalms 29:2). Do you ascribe to God what God truly is? There is always the temptation to ascribe glory to ourselves. If we speak or carry out an excursion for the Lord, we tend to take the credit. We must not steal God's glory.

God does not share His glory with anyone. When we are tempted to pat ourselves on the back, we tread on dangerous ground. We might break our arm patting ourselves on the back. Do not take the credit or praise.

to whom belong the glory

"To whom belong" means glory and dominion belong to Jesus, not us. The focus is on the person.

"Glory" primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, brightness, splendor, radiance — magnificence, fame, renown, honor. The implication is of external appearance, splendor and radiance. Glory is anything that catches the eye and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion. Glory has to do with credit. Jesus gets the credit because of His work on the cross and provisions in time. The credit or glory belongs to Him. He gets eternal renown from His work for us.

"Glory" also implies a manifestation of power characterized by glory - glorious power, amazing might (Romans 6:4). It is that which causes wonder or that which causes people to marvel.

The New Testament uses "glory" of the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation. Glory is what He essentially is and does as exhibited in whatever way He reveals Himself. This glory is particularly revealed in the Person of Christ, in whom essentially His glory has ever shone forth and ever will do (John 17:5, 24).

"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The issue in the glory of God is not so much what God is in His essence but what His essence becomes in manifestation. We manifest God's glory by the use of our gift.

Principle

God's purpose for us is to be God-centered

Application

What is your motive for ministry? Do you do what you do for self? Are you self-centered or God-centered? The message here is that God wants us to be God-centered. Everything we do, we do to the glory of God.

Our motive for ministry ought to be to do what we do for God. This is the same motive that moves God. God is motivated by His own nature, by His own glory.

and the dominion

"Dominion" is power exercised in rule, force or strength. This is might--especially manifested power. This is ruling power. "Dominion" implies authority. God has the sovereign right to do what He does.

"Dominion" occurs frequently in doxologies (1 Peter 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Revelation 1:6; 5:13; 1

Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 2:14). Dominion is God's power to rule or control.

Note how this passage puts emphasis upon God:

"manifold grace of God" "oracles of God" "ability which God gives" "God may be glorified"

Principle

God wants us to recognize His sovereign rule for our lives.

Application

Do you recognize God's manifested power in the circumstances of your life? Do you see God at work in your situation?

God also has the sovereign right to do with us as He pleases. God gave us our life to manage for Him. Should He chose to do something with our life that is not our will, we should recognize that we are not our own.

forever and ever

"To" in "to whom" means with a view to eternal values ("forever and ever"). God wants us to orient to the eternal order rather than temporal order.

"Forever and ever" is an expression for eternity. The idea is unlimited duration of time, with particular focus upon the future - always, forever, eternally. Peter wants Jesus to receive the glory into eternity (Ephesians 3:21; Luke 1:33; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 25; Hebrews 1:8). Extensive expressions of "forever and ever" are emphatic and are found especially in doxologies.

Amen

"Amen" is an assertion of fact, not an expression of a wish. "Amen" means "I believe it." Peter believes that glory and dominion belongs to Jesus into eternity. He believes in the sovereignty of Jesus over his life. This orientation will prepare people for any disaster that may come their way

Principle

We need to put our gifts in the perspective of eternity.

Application

Our master motive should revolve around the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). If we live for

the glory of God, our gifts will be used for eternal purpose.

What we do in time counts for eternity. The phrase "forever and ever" puts our ministry and gifts in eternal perspective. We need to keep eternal values in view. We look at time from the viewpoint of eternity.

None of us walk with aimless feet. Every effect has a cause. We have a motive for everything we do. We cannot act without a motive but we can choose which motive we want. It is not the motive which seizes the man but the man seizes the motive. A person of integrity cannot be influenced by a bad motive nor can a person of little integrity be influenced by a good motive (Luke 6:45). Our motive is as we are. What we are is decided by our character. God wants our goal and our motive to be one.

Pleasures are passing states. They possess no enduring value. We feel one way at one time and feel another way at another time. So no pleasures, no matter how extensive they may be, can bring us ultimate satisfaction.

Our true source of satisfaction comes from an eternal God. Therefore, our motive is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Our highest motive is to live for God. We ought to operate on the same motive that moves God. God is motivated by His own nature and glory (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

1 Peter 4:12

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."

With verse 12 we begin a new section of 1 Peter. Peter anticipates the duress the believers of Asia Minor were about to face. The Roman government blamed Christians for the burning of Rome. Rome covered some of them with pitch and used them as living torches to light the imperial gardens at night.

Peter now regards suffering as an imminent possibility. He now directs believers how to cope with this suffering.

Beloved

"Beloved" is a title of endearment for believers. This reminds us of love from Christians and love from God.

"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14).

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children" (Ephesians 5:1).

"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved" (Philippians 4:1).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2).

True love has the capacity to empathize with those who suffer. That is why Peter calls these Asia Minor Christians "beloved." True love finds its greatest expression in times of trial. It is important to know that we are loved in times of trial whether it is God's love or the love of fellow Christians.

We ask, "If God loves me, why does he allow this to happen to me?" God's answer is hammering hardens steel and crumbles putty. God's purpose in trial is to build character.

Principle

We mean so much to the heart of God that He expresses His love to us in terms of endearment.

Application

God calls His only begotten Son "beloved." We mean so much to the heart of God that He uses the same term for us as He did for His own Son. Do you think that no one loves you? If you do, you have not read the New Testament very carefully. God loves you unconditionally, eternally.

do not think it strange

Suffering should not take Christians by surprise. Some think it is unusual that Christians suffer. We should expect adversity. Those who do not anticipate problems are more vulnerable to

problems. No Christian should be surprised by the attitude of the world toward either the Christian or Christianity.

Jesus endured rejection and persecution, why should Christians be any different than their Lord? This is why Christian suffering can be referred to as "Christ's sufferings." We suffer the same nature of suffering as He suffered.

Literally this phrase is "Stop thinking it a thing alien" to you. "Stop being shocked by the maximum pressure coming to you." The Asia Minor Christians thought because they were Christians they were immune from suffering. They thought suffering was foreign to Christian living while God thinks it is innate to the Christian life. Suffering is not foreign but part and parcel of living before God. Christians should expect suffering.

Suffering should shock no Christian. Any disaster or catastrophe that comes our way comes by way of the plan of God. Why should a Christian be shocked or surprised when problems come to him? God does not design trial to ruin us but to test our capacity of soul.

Principle

God expects us to suffer as a Christian under an eternal plan.

Application

The Christian thinks differently than those without Christ. He has an orientation to the eternal plan of God. That plan includes God's providential care for us. Nothing happens to us without going through God's filter system.

Even Jesus was "perfected" through suffering (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8-9). He needed adversity to mature His faith in His humanity. If Jesus needed suffering to advance His faith how much more do we need it? Jesus was not imperfect in the sense of sin. He was imperfect in the sense of development. If the sinless human Jesus needed development, we certainly need spiritual development with all our sin.

concerning the fiery trial

A "fiery trial" is a trial by ordeal. Christians face testing by fire. These trials are not light ones. Flames of persecution will scorch them.

The word "fiery" may refer to the smelting process. Smiths put gold or silver ore into a smelting pot to separate the dross from the gold making the gold pure. As the ore heats the dross comes to the top leaving pure gold at the bottom. God puts Christians into the fire to separate them from their sin.

The Roman government made a hostile policy change toward Christians at the time of the writing of 1 Peter. Christians were unjustly blamed for bad things happening to the Roman Empire. Hundreds were killed for apparent treachery.

Principle

God puts us into the fire to separate us from sin and to build our character.

Application

Not all trial is a "fiery" ordeal. Some of our troubles are not serious but simply pesky little things like mosquito bites. At other times a bumble bee will sting us. That is more serious. There are times when God calls us to go through "fiery" trial.

We should not take the attitude that "I don't know what I ever did to deserve this." You may not have done anything to deserve deep suffering. This is part of God's plan for you. Trial is inevitable in that plan. No one gets through life without hurt and pain. Just because we become Christians does not make us immune from suffering and exempt from trial. You will weep. You will hurt.

We get the idea that when we become Christians God puts a glass cage around us so that no problem will come our way and nothing can hurt us. For sure, God does hedge us about. Absolutely nothing can touch us unless He initials it first. No trial can come to us without the Lord giving it His OK first. Everything He permits is for our good and His glory.

We may not fully appreciate this while we go through the trial. We cry, "This is hot! It hurts!" Sure it does but we will come out the other side

stronger and better Christians. After gold is refined it is more valuable. After the dross is removed, gold is more beautiful. God is in the process of removing the dross from our lives. He is in the process of making us more beautiful. Do not think this is strange. This is par for the course. This is God's plan.

No Christian goes to heaven on "flowery beds of ease." Yet we have the promise that God "will never, ever, ever, ever, ever [5 particles in the Greek] leave us" (Hebrews 13:5).

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2).

We can count on the Lord to go with us when we go through fiery trials. It is just like the Lord to be with us in trial.

which is to

"To" means face to face. If we meet trials face to face, we will benefit from the courage of honest examination of what God is doing with our lives. When we face trails with a relaxed attitude we can withstand anything that comes our way.

try you

All trials for the Christian seek to prove character. God designs adversity for our benefit. God learns our character by subjecting us to extensive testing.

Principle

God designs trouble for us so that we will prove that the Christian life is real.

Application

We dare not seek to detour God's plan for our lives because then we would deflect God's purpose for us.

"That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed there unto" (1 Thessalonians 3:3).

"Appointed" means that God ordained our suffering. God makes an appointment for us to suffer.

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

God "calls" us to suffer. This is our calling. "I didn't count on that when I became a Christian. I thought I was going to be free from trouble." No, but we do have the hand of God on us while we go through these things. God provides and protects and allows nothing to happen to us that He does not personally screen. We would not want it any other way.

God knows the straw that will break the camel's back. He will never heap upon you more than you can carry (1 Corinthians 10:13). You will find that He is under the load as well, helping you to carry it. He will carry both you and your burden.

as though some strange thing

"Strange" is something alien or foreign in nature. Suffering is not foreign to Christian living. Christians should expect trial to come their way. God has a purpose for allowing pain.

Although God designs suffering into our lives, He can handle any reversal that we may encounter. There never was nor ever will be a trial or heartache or disaster that is too great for the plan of God. When the Christian links with the providential plan of God, he can orient to suffering.

The "thing" could be anything. It could be the time when you were admitted to the emergency room and wondered why. You may find in your hospital room someone who needs the Lord. They watch you as you cope with pain. Now you know the reason. God put you in that hospital to be a testimony to the nurses, to the patient in the next bed. You would never have met that person otherwise. You would never have had the opportunity to share Christ so extensively.

God has a plan, a program, just for you. That is why we know that "all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).

happened to you

Nothing just happens to the Christian. Everything that comes his way comes from the providential hand of God.

Principle

The Christian should anticipate adversity as part of the plan of God for his life.

Application

What happened to you last month? What is happening to you this week? Put down the things that happen to you as God factoring in "good" into your life. To understand this you must come to the quiet place near to the heart of God. There you can say to the Lord, "Yes, Lord I know your providential care for me. You have a plan for me."

We learn from the test so that we do not have to take the test again. We write over the test, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). We settle the test once for all. We need not go through it again. We can give our lives in reckless abandon to the One who loves us unconditionally.

1 Peter 4:13

"But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

But rejoice

"But" introduces a contrast. In contrast to the time when disaster hit and we fell apart, we now "rejoice." Instead of thinking it strange that we suffer, we can now rejoice in the suffering. We do not rejoice in the trial itself. We do not rejoice in the reversal but in the Lord who never changes.

The joy of these Asia Minor Christians was not in persecution itself, but in the fact that they were able to suffer for the Lord. They took a stand for the Lord.

to the extent

We rejoice in accordance with the degree that we suffer with Christ. To the degree that we share Christ's suffering we rejoice.

Principle

The degree of our devotion to the Lord is measured by our willingness to pay the price for Him.

Application

Persecution is a test of our faith and a test of the reality of our faith. Only those who are willing to suffering will take risks that will put them

jeopardy. These people truly love the Lord. Their convictions go beyond convenience.

The Lord uses both the rod and the staff on us. The staff comforts us. The rod comforts us as well, but the rod disciplines us so that we return to fellowship with the Lord.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

We now keep on rejoicing (present tense) through anything that may come our way. No trial can daunt the dynamics of our lives. To the contrary, we can have joy in trial. This was the testimony of Paul and his colleagues.

"And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:40).

that you partake of Christ's sufferings

"Partake" means to have a share of, to share with, to take part in with the implication of some kind of joint participation. We share in the sufferings of Christ. We share mutual interest in suffering with Christ. There is a close relationship in facing adversity together. In some cases, football teams that go through adversity together draw closer together. Christians who go through trials with Jesus draw closer to him.

We suffer now with him but we will also share in his glory in the future.

"And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

The New Testament uses the word "partake" in other passages dealing with chastening.

"But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8).

We partake of divine discipline when we step out of fellowship. "Chastening" means child training. The purpose of child training is remedial, educatory, and not punitive. God is not trying to

get even with us. He never loses his temper nor loses control of His emotions. He educates us so that we will not make the same mistake again.

"For they [our parents] indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He [God] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:10).

We partake of God's holiness as a result of suffering.

Principle

We share more intimate fellowship with the Lord when we enter his suffering.

Application

We are in partnership with the Lord's suffering. We partake jointly in Christ's suffering. We have no choice. This is what it means to be a child of the King. God thinks too much of us to let us get away with murder. God cares too much to let us have our own way. He is a Father raising his children.

Some children are left to themselves. They grow up to populate prisons and asylums. However, in the family of God, our Father is faithful and disciplines us when we go astray. His children do not intimidate him. He is not afraid to deal with us.

We are in partnership with Jesus the Lord. Part of that partnership involves persecution.

"That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10).

that when His glory is revealed

The word "that" connotes a purpose clause. The purpose of our joy is the return of Christ. We keep eternal values in view during our suffering. We may suffer now, but when we see the Lord we will be specially blessed. The Christian's future is a basis for hope.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:18).

"Is revealed" means to unveil, to uncover, to cause something to be fully known. It means to reveal or to disclose who Jesus truly is. "Is revealed" in the Greek is not a verb but a noun. Literally the phrase reads, "in the revealing of His glory." The revealing of His glory is the unveiling of the truth of who Jesus is in His coming.

Note how Peter weaves together both the suffering and the glory of the coming of Christ. First comes the suffering, then the glory. The glory has not yet been revealed. When he comes in glory our glory will be revealed as well. When the glory of Jesus is revealed, our glory will be revealed. In the meantime, we suffer with him. Some suffer for him.

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1John 3:2).

Principle

There is glory in knowing that the history of suffering will culminate with the coming of Christ.

Application

We face the reproach of Christ, the offense of the cross and the afflictions of the gospel. We must deal with these three ugly experiences. We deal with them by keeping the coming of Christ in view. God reveals His glory in persecution.

"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Hebrews 11:26).

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased" (Galatians 5:11).

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Jesus' "glory" is His essence as manifested at His coming. Believers will see that glory at the rapture and non-believers will see it at His second coming (Matthew 19:28; 25:31).

you may also be glad

"Glad" means to enjoy a state of joy and well-being-to rejoice.

"I rejoice as I suffer for you" (Colossians 1:24).

"Although saddened, we are always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

"Glad" is the same word as "rejoice" in the first phrase of this verse. "Glad" is not a good translation because it may be understood as a superficial emotion that comes from outward stimulus. You buy a new car and therefore you are "glad." At another point you graduate from college and you are glad. Joy transcends gladness. Joy is an inner animation of soul that bases its orientation on truth.

Principle

Christian joy is not superficial emotion but jubilant celebration of the person of Christ.

Application

A little boy was sailing his toy boat in the middle of a pond when the wind stopped leaving the boat in the middle of the pond. An older boy came along and started throwing stones near the boat. The younger boy was greatly disturbed until he began to see that the waves moved the boat toward shore. God causes many waves to splash against our lives but each wave is for our own good. When we recognize that God causes the waves of our lives for a purpose, we accept suffering as part of His divine design.

When we realize that the purpose for our suffering is for the name of Christ, there will be true celebration when Christ comes back again.

with exceeding joy

"Exceeding joy" means to celebrate a victory. We experience a state of great joy that often involves verbal expression - to be extremely joyful, to be overjoyed, to rejoice greatly. When we arrive at the point where we have inner joy based on what God does for us then we have something to celebrate. Celebration is a result of victory.

Faith lays hold of future glory. Christians have a wonderful future. We therefore need not fear old age or what the future holds in time. There is no comfort in the future however, for those without Christ.

"Exceeding" means to go beyond and carries the idea of exulting. In that day we will have an

intense joy and a transcending joy. This is joy that goes beyond anything we have ever known. We cannot adequately describe this joy.

"Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The only joy in which non-Christians can participate is temporal joy - a joy which never lasts.

Joy is manifested in the Christian who is controlled by the Holy Spirit,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Galatians 5:22).

Principle

Suffering forms a backdrop for God to demonstrate his grace, making us exult in inexpressible joy.

Application

David spent much of his life as a lonely shepherd boy and later as a fleeting nomad. This prepared him for his role as king. God operates the same way in our lives. He prepares us to be conformed into the image of Christ. David said that "It was good that I have been afflicted."

"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

Black clouds make us appreciate the sunshine. The grace of God cannot be seen unless he has a means to manifest it through suffering. When trials come our way it is an opportunity for God to display his grace. Persecution blesses us because it forms a dark backdrop for the true radiance of the Christian life. The stark contrast of God's blessing in trial is like a brilliant diamond that sits on pitch-black velvet.

Affliction is the emery wheel that takes off the rough edges of our lives. Suffering makes us more mature and appreciative of eternal values.

1 Peter 4:14

"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

If you are reproached

The "if" carries the idea of "since" in the Greek -- "Since you are reproached." These Asia Minor Christians were in the process of being reproached for the name of Christ. No Christian should be surprised that people laugh at him/her because of their faith. Ridicule is part and parcel of the Christian life.

This is persecution of slander and of the tongue. "Reproached" means defame, disparage. Reproach is verbal abuse by disparagement because of our testimony. Someone puts us down because of our faith.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11).

How many of us have been reproached for Christ?

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Moses turned down the prestige and wealth of the greatest leader in the world of that day. In his day the pyramids stood in their majesty. He had the proper "estimation" or viewpoint. He had the right set of values. What have we given up for the name of Christ? Not much. Moses knew how to add spiritually.

"And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased" (Galatians 5:11).

The "offense of the cross" goes with "reproached for the name of Christ."

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share

with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Principle

People who share their faith will experience verbal attack.

Application

Christianity in our day does not cost much nor does it demand much. We have an anemic Christianity today. It is a flabby Christianity compared to that of the first century. Is it possible that we believe the same things the apostles did? When we read the book of Acts it appears that they had one different brand of Christianity and we have quite another.

1 Peter 4:14b

"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit

of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified."

for the name of Christ

"Name" refers to all that Christ represents. Our name represents us. If we write a check or note that name represents our person and character.

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21) [Jesus means Savior.]

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20) [We gather together representing Jesus.]

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12) [We believe in what He represents.]

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14) [We pray on the basis of the character of Christ.]

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16).

"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:23).

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31) [We have eternal life because of what Jesus represents.]

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38) [We are baptism in what Jesus represents.]

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12) [Jesus name is the only basis of salvation.]

"Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14) [We are called to represent His name.]

"Then Paul answered, 'What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus'" (Acts 21:13) [We die for what Jesus represents.]

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11) [The Father gives Jesus a distinct Name.]

"For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved'" (Romans 10:13).

"Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10) [Appeal to unity is on the basis of Jesus' Name.]

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17) [Everything we do we do representing Jesus the Lord.]

"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

"He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ...And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:13, 16).

Principle

Everything we are and everything we do we represent Jesus' name.

Application

What kind of representative of Jesus are you?

blessed are you

When insult because of our testimony comes our way, God gives us a special blessing. God gives us a special beatitude

when we face insult for our faith.

"Blessed" means a well ordered soul (1 Peter 3:14; Matthew 5:11). Suffering for Christ is no penalty, it is a privilege.

"Blessed" does not mean happy. Happiness depends on circumstances and circumstances depend on chance. People who

depend on chance happiness as the basis for their orientation do not operate on God's principles. These people are shallow

and unstable. A blessed person is someone whose state of soul is neither produced nor affected by outside circumstances.

Principle

A well-ordered soul comes from God.

Application

A well ordered soul is a distinct quality of God and cannot be acquired apart from him. We cannot have what God has apart from God himself. God is independent of circumstances. We can be independent of circumstances.

A well-ordered person needs nothing. He is independent of circumstances. He is not dependent on luck, but upon divine resources within.

Blessedness is the state whereby one enjoys God. It is a state that belongs uniquely and intrinsically to God (1 Timothy 1:11). No one can make God blessed. So this is a condition of soul whereby the soul derives its satisfaction from the source of God.

for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

There are many titles for the Holy Spirit in the Bible but this is the only place where he is called "the Spirit of glory." In other places the New Testament calls him the "Spirit of truth," the "Spirit of life," the "Spirit of Christ," the "Spirit of God," the "Spirit of the Father," the "Spirit of adoption." "The Spirit of glory and of God" refers to the Holy Spirit's divine presence with us. He bestows glory on us. This glory is the reflected glory of God. The idea is that God is glorified in those who suffer for his name (John 12:23; 13:31).

"Rests upon you" refers to his indwelling of Christians. God blesses us because the Holy Spirit is with us. He is not only with us but he "rests upon" us. This means the Holy Spirit works with us in these situations.

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16).

Jesus uses "rests upon" in the phrase "I will give you rest."

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Principle

Christians can rest in the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit when they share their faith.

Application

We do not normally think in terms of the Holy Spirit resting on us. The Holy Spirit has many ministries to the Christian. He guides, teaches, convicts, and protects us. This is the reason Christians are blessed when slander comes their way. The Spirit of God is there to fortify and strengthen us.

The Lord takes it upon himself to give us rest. In this passage, the Spirit of glory rests upon and causes us to cope with the venom and hate that people cast upon us. This is not a rest from work, but the harmonious working of all faculties of the Holy Spirit upon us.

On their part

"Their part" refers to those who reproach Christians for sharing their faith.

He is blasphemed

"Blaspheme" means to slander. People rail at Christians who take a stand for the Lord Jesus. They speak evil of the Lord. They wonder why you do not hold to their values anymore. They cannot figure out why you do not still run with them (1 Peter 4:4; 2:12).

but on your part He is glorified

How do Christians relate to Christ? We glorify Him. We make much of Jesus. When we glorify God we fulfill God's purpose of creation for us. Our purpose is to glorify the Lord Jesus. We do not have to be brilliant or gifted to glorify Him, we just have to be clean. God's purpose in suffering is to glorify Christ.

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).

"And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching

and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:40-42).

Principle

God's purpose in suffering is to glorify Christ.

Application

People take Jesus' name in vain everywhere. Have you ever heard anyone taking Buddha's name in vain? Did you ever hear anyone say, "For Buddha's sake," "For Confucius' sake," "For Mohammed's sake?"

The Christian holds the name of Jesus in high regard. He portrays Him as the most exalted person in the universe.

1 Peter 4:15

"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters."

But let none of you suffer

The subject of Christian suffering is the theme of First Peter. We can suffer for good or evil. We can suffer as a thief or as someone with a vibrant testimony.

as a murderer

Peter lists four sins whereby Christians are vulnerable in relation to persecution. The first three deal with violation of laws of the land. Peter now throws out a caution--suffering is no justification for anarchy.

First, we cannot justify murder even though people may have killed our loved one. Not committing murder was the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13). Brutal treatment is no excuse for being brutal in return. We cannot play God with someone else's life. The potential for murder lies within every Christian. We have the potential of committing any heinous crime.

Principle

The potential for any sin lies within any Christian.

Application

Murder is the worst sin that we can imagine. Peter obviously saw the possibility that some Christians might go to this extent. The best people, if they are

driven far enough, might commit murder. The best of people need to be warned against the worst of sins.

a thief

No Christian is exempt from the possibility of becoming a thief. Those that think that they are beyond the reach of gross sin need to read 1 Corinthians 10:12.

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Principle

The potential for thievery is in each of us.

Application

The potential for stealing resides within each of us. Satan will test us on this by little things. Someone gives you too much money in return. You rationalize, "Well, it is their mistake. They should be more competent." Suppose the situation was turned around, would you want them to return the money? "Oh sure, it's my money."

God wants us to respect the property of others. Some Christians might rationalize that "Since someone stole my goods, I can steal theirs." Talking about a Christian stealing is like talking about an honest thief.

The Christian businessman that does not operate with cutthroat means may cost him business. If a Christian operates on principle, it could cost him his job. He might pay by losing a promotion.

The Lord Jesus spoils us for the stealing business. Our children can tell if we cut corners. They know if we cheat. Where do they learn to cheat on exams? Where do they learn to do shady things? Most learn it at home.

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Some of us have never learned to respect the property of others.

an evildoer

An "evildoer" is one who customarily engages in doing what is bad. In this passage, evildoing may

refer to civil disobedience. This is a wrongdoer in relation to society.

No Christian is immune from evil. The capacity for evil is still resident in the sin nature. When we become Christians we do not lose the capacity to sin. The apparatus for sin is still resident.

"Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

If we are going to be a good lover, we need to be a good hater of evil.

"You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked" (Psalm 97:10).

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate" (Proverbs 8:13).

Principle

No Christian should partake in civil disobedience unless he is called upon to deny his faith.

Application

An evildoer ignores the rights of other people. An evildoer is a person who participates in civil disobedience. This person orients to mob psychology. Mobs destroy property, lives and rights of individuals. No Christian should develop mob thinking.

God expects us to develop a hatred for civil disobedience. Anarchy destroys society. Even bad government is better than no government. At least the bad laws give some protection for law-abiding people.

Some people are spiritual anarchists. They are a law unto themselves.

"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

or as a busybody in other people's matters

Peter says, "Do nothing that would give your enemies an excuse to attack your Christianity, even to the extent of meddling in other people's business." Some people love to meddle in others'

affairs. This person is a self-appointed overseer of other people's business. These people love to run the lives of other people. They interfere in business not their own.

We have more busybodies in church than murders. We have more busybodies than thieves. We have more busybodies than evildoers. Do you make it a practice to stick your nose in other people's business? Some people tell others how to raise their children when they have brats of their own.

The Bible speaks to the issue of meddling in the affairs of others in a number of passages:

"That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

Evidently we need to take lessons on how to be quiet. It takes some study to learn how to mind our own business.

"That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing" (2 Thessalonians 3:11).

Principle

It is unchristian to meddle in the affairs of other people.

Application

Too much idle time introduces the problem of being a busybody.

"And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

If tattlers and busybodies find no one to listen, they would be forced out of business. If we receive stolen goods we are as guilty as the thief. There is something in the human spirit that loves the juicy morsel of gossip.

Some things are better left unsaid even though it may be true and accurate. You may feel that you are simply reporting the facts but what good is this doing? It would not serve any purpose to pass it

on. It should die with you but you are dying to tell someone. Like money, it burns a hole in your pocket. You must tell someone. You call someone and say you have a "prayer request." We call this "spiritual gossip." "I don't want you to think I am gossiping but I would like you to pray about this. Mr. and Mrs. So and So are having marriage trouble." There are some things we pray about privately.

Are you a nosy person? Are you a person who cannot mind his own business (Romans 14:4, 10)? Christians do not have the right to run other people's lives. If we do, we play God. We try to

lead the lives of other people. Some Christians bully other Christians.

The nosy person always starts out with attitude sins. This person is usually bitter, antagonistic, vindictive, implacable, and operates with a guilt complex. He is so unhappy with himself that he tries to run the lives of other people. He wants to super impose his view of the world on other people. He wants to pour them into his pseudo mold. He does this by maligning, nit-picking and criticizing. He basic system of operation is retaliation and bullying.
