

The Christian's Duty in a Hostile World, Part 3

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:10–11

Code: 60-43

INTRODUCTION

A. Salvation Is a New Life

Salvation is more than the forgiveness of sins. It's a transformation of a person's life. Not mentioning transformation leaves the cross as the focal point of salvation. As vital as the cross is to Christianity, it wasn't the early church's central focus. Kenneth Clark in his book *Civilisation* points out that the cross was a very late symbol in Christian art and culture. He determined that its first appearance as such was in 430A.D. in the church of Santa Sabina at Rome, where it's located obscurely in a corner ([New York: Harper and Row, 1969], p. 29).

Instead the church focused on the resurrection and the believer's new life in Christ. Of course His death paid the penalty for our sins and we died in Christ spiritually, but we also arose in Christ to walk in newness of life! In salvation Christ "delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). So new life is regeneration--the imparting of divine life into man's soul.

B. Salvation Results in Good Works

Divinely implanted into each believer is a holy and incorruptible seed. That seed bears the fruit of good works, which the apostle James said are inherent in the nature of saving faith (James 2:17). The Reformer Martin Luther described saving faith this way: "O, this faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing! It is impossible that it should not be ceaselessly doing that which is good. It does not even ask whether good works should be done; but before the question can be asked, it has done them, and it is constantly engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works, is a man without faith. He gropes and casts about him to find faith and good works, not knowing what either of them is, and yet prattles and idly multiplies words about faith and good works...."

"Faith is a living, well-founded confidence in the grace of God, so perfectly certain that it would die a thousand times rather than surrender its conviction. Such confidence and personal knowledge of divine grace makes its possessor joyful, bold, and full of warm affection toward God and all created things--all of which the Holy Spirit works in faith. Hence, such a man becomes without constraint willing and eager to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer all manner of ills, in order to please and glorify God, who has shown toward him such grace" (cited by Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation* [New York: Random House, 1952], pp. 121-22).

Because the impulse to obey God's Word is inherent in our new life, it's only natural Jesus would say part of the Great Commission is "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). First Peter 4:7-11 draws on that impulse by telling us our duty in a hostile world.

REVIEW

I. THE INCENTIVE (v. 7a)

II. THE INSTRUCTIONS (vv. 7b-11a)

A. Concerning Personal Holiness (v. 7b)

B. Concerning Mutual Love (vv. 8-9)

LESSON

C. Concerning Spiritual Service (vv. 10-11a)

"As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies."

Inner holiness leads to outward love, which manifests itself through spiritual service. But spiritual service without inward holiness or outward love is hypocrisy and legalism. "Serving" means "to wait on someone." It pictures a table waiter who does common, ordinary tasks. That means we should live to serve others in a practical way and we do that by using our spiritual gifts.

1. The extent of spiritual gifts (v. 10a)

"Each one." a) An explanation Every Christian has a special gift. The apostle Paul said, "To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... The same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). As every part of a human body has a certain function, so also does each member of Christ's Body. That's because "the body is not one member, but many" (1 Cor. 12:14). The Spirit distributes gifts "individually" (1 Cor. 12:11). That term means "peculiar to oneself" and refers to our uniqueness as spiritual snowflakes. As our fingerprints identify us in the physical realm, so our special blend of spiritual gifts mark us as unique in the spiritual realm. Therefore, the gifts are universal (every believer has one) as well as individual (each gift is uniquely given). b) An illustration How can the Spirit divide the few gifts listed in His Word among millions of Christians and still make each one unique? Try thinking of the gifts as colors on a palette. God dips His brush into different color or gift categories and paints each believer a unique color. Not only does God color our gifts in different ways (Eph. 4:7), but He also gives us the right amount of faith to use them (Rom. 12:3). Paul stated the same thing this way: "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons" (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

2. The source of spiritual gifts (v. 10b)

"Has received a special gift."

The Spirit supernaturally gives, controls, and energizes the gifts and therefore we can't earn, pray for, or generate them. The Greek term translated "gift" in Ephesians 4:7 (Gk., *doreas*) emphasizes that it's freely given, and the term in 1 Peter 4:10 (*charisma*) underscores the aspect of grace. Sometimes "spiritual" (Gk., *pneumatikos*) modifies "gift" to stress its spiritual character and capacity. In New Testament usage *charisma* refers both to spiritual gifts and salvation. Both are equally gracious because both are undeserved and unearned. A gift doesn't involve human talent but is a divine capacity to minister as part of Christ's Body.

3. The use of spiritual gifts (v. 10c)

"Employ it in serving one another, as good stewards."

a) Everyone benefits "For the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7) indicates that every gift mutually benefits Christ's Body. Conversely, non-use adversely affects it. As Paul said, "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,' it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; or again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary" (vv. 15-22). b) Everyone is important Sometimes we wrongly depreciate members of Christ's Body: "Those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to

that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" (vv. 23-25). The visible, outwardly prolific members aren't necessarily the most important ones. Rather, we're to value every believer's role. And a believer who says, "I'll only serve if I'm a hand or an eye" is being disobedient to God's Word. That's because we're saved to serve.c) Everyone is responsible"Good stewards" (1 Pet. 4:10) tells us we're to be responsible in managing our gifts. In Bible times, a steward handled an owner's land, funds, food supplies, and other resources. Today we must properly use the gifts that God gives to us. Not serving others with your gifts hurts the Body's health since no believer can take your place.

4. The variety of spiritual gifts (v. 10d)

"Of the manifold grace of God."

"Manifold" means "many-colored," speaking of multi-faceted giftedness. Two believers can have a gift that involves teaching but each with a unique blend of grace and faith. That provides great diversity in the Body of Christ! Or someone may preach with an emphasis on showing mercy, and another may preach with an emphasis on discerning the truth. So the use of a gift varies from person to person.

We're better off not trying to identify our gifts in a technical way. A computer study can't identify our gifts. Rather, our service in the church under the Spirit's control is our gift. And that kind of service produces a positive impact. Although we won't be able to precisely identify our gifts, we can observe how the Spirit uses us when we're available to Him.

5. The categories of spiritual gifts (v. 11)

"Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies."

A believer has either a speaking or serving gift. Speaking gifts include preaching, teaching, wisdom, knowledge, discernment, or leadership. To others He gives serving gifts such as administration, prayer, showing mercy, or helps.

If a believer has a speaking gift, he's to communicate "the utterances of God"--a reference to Scripture (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2). A serving gift is to be done "by the strength which God supplies."

CONCLUSION

Why are we to do all that? "So that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11). The goal of our holiness, love, and service is to glorify God. "In all things" refers to all matters of Christian duty. This here is a doxology--a word about praise or glory. We can only glorify God "through Jesus Christ."

Commentators have long discussed whether "to whom" refers to God or Jesus Christ. It is a blessed and inspired ambiguity because the glory belongs to God in Christ and Christ in God.

The apostle Paul said, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). A Christian should want to glorify God in everything. The way to do that is to live in light of the second coming of Christ (1 Pet. 4:7a) and fulfill our obligations of holiness, love, and service (vv. 7b-11). Peter couldn't resist saying "amen" to conclude the matter. It means "so let it be." Along with Peter we should say, "Let my life be for the glory of God!"

Focusing on the Facts

1. How did the early church view salvation?
2. are inherent in the nature of saving faith (James 2:17).
3. How did Martin Luther describe saving faith?
4. Inner leads to outward , which manifests itself through spiritual.
5. Explain and illustrate the extent of spiritual gifts.
6. Name the source of spiritual gifts.
7. Explain the similarity between spiritual gifts and salvation.

8. In 1 Corinthians 12:7 what does "for the common good" refer to? How do the following verses illustrate that point?
9. What does "good stewards" tell us in 1 Peter 4:10?
10. Explain the meaning of "manifold" in 1 Peter 4:10.
11. Is it necessary to identify your gift? Explain.
12. What are the two categories of gifts (1 Pet. 4:11)?
13. Explain the relation of "utterances" in 1 Peter 4:11 to the use of gifts (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2).
14. What should be the goal of everything you do (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11)?

Pondering the Principles

1. The gift of helps (1 Cor. 12:28) is a vital ministry. Maybe you can't teach, preach, or sing well, but perhaps you can help clean a house, prepare a meal, mow the lawn, or make household or mechanical repairs for a needy believer. Don't overlook the significance of deeds that appear to be common and ordinary since they're essential to the health of the Body of Christ.
2. We've learned that the purpose of spiritual gifts is for "serving one another" (1 Pet. 4:10). Christ is the perfect example of a servant. At the Last Supper He washed His disciples' feet and said, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you (John 13:14-15). He also said, "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:26-28). Are you using your gift to serve others in the church?

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