

## PETER

Hospitality, Special Gifts

August 11, 2013

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- I. I. Be Holy In All Your Behavior With A Holiness Like God's Holiness
  - A. I Peter 4:7-11 . . . The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. [8] Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Be hospitable to one another without complaint. [10] As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. [11] Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
  - B. Just by way of reminder, I Peter's overall focus is that of presenting us ways to be holy in all our behavior just as God is holy. Today's portion comes from the smaller context of taking on the same purpose Christ had when He suffered in the flesh, for such suffering leads to ceasing from sin. And Peter's focus within this smaller context is that of properly preparing to remain faithful during the end times.
  - C. Pray
- II. Hospitality
  - A. I Peter 4:9 . . . Be hospitable to one another without complaint.
    - 1. Hospitality is, in essence, sharing your home and possessions in order to show kindness and generosity to someone(s) in need of shelter, food, and even clothing.
    - 2. Hospitality is not unique to OT Israel or NT Christianity. Historically, many communities, tribes, and even nations practiced hospitality toward their own people.
      - a. It does appear from historical records that during OT times, some people groups even showed hospitality to foreigners and strangers traveling through their land.
      - b. However, it appears that Israel is the only nation to receive specific laws from their God concerning hospitality to non-Jews, and especially to foreign widows and orphans living within their borders, as well as to foreigners traveling through their Land.
        - (1) One of the scriptures stating God's command comes from Leviticus 19:33-34 . . . When a stranger resides with you

in your land, you shall not do him wrong. [34] The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

- (2) In other words, Israel's hospitality was to mimic God's care for them while they were traveling through or living in foreign lands – from Abraham's travels, to their time in Egypt, and until they possessed the Promised Land.
  - c. As NT Christians, we also are exhorted to show hospitality to all people, and especially the weak, disenfranchised, and poor. Yet here in I Peter 4:9, Peter is exhorting us to especially be hospitable to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
  - d. Paul affirms this two-pronged show of hospitality in Galatians 6:10, when he says, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
- B. As we look through God's word, we discover that the practice of hospitality is one of the validating qualities of those who belong to God.
  - 1. For example, in Isaiah 58, God exposes the emptiness, and therefore worthlessness of Israel's outward practice of religious observances. And why was their outward show of religion empty and worthless? Because of their selfish and sinful living on a day-to-day basis.
    - a. In other words, though their religion highly influenced their participation in certain religious days and practices, it failed to transform their heart and lives. This makes Isaiah 58 the classic example of a people who honor God with their lips while in their day-to-day living, their heart is far from Him.
    - b. For example, in verses 6-7, God tells Israel that God-pleasing religious observances – fasting in this case – must go hand-in-hand with a day-by-day, God-pleasing life. And so God says: "Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? [7] Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"
    - c. The point here is that practical hospitality is listed among the other daily or common practices that are evidence of a genuinely godly life. And so we see the importance to God of hospitality.

2. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus uses a parable to describe His coming judgment on all mankind, following His second coming.
    - a. In this parable, Jesus makes it clear that hospitality is one of the godly activities that separate the sheep – who inherit eternal life, from the goats – who are eternally damned.
    - b. In verses 34-36, we read: "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. [35] For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; [36] naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'
    - c. Now I understand that hospitality cannot pay the penalty for our sin. Only Jesus can. And yet, Jesus lists hospitality as one of the day-to-day, godly practices that are evidence of salvation.
  3. In exhorting us to keep hypocrisy out of love, Paul weighs in on the practice of hospitality. He gets to the practice of hospitality by first exhorting us to be devoted to one another in brotherly love, to give preference to one another in honor, and to be diligent and fervent in these expressions of love, because we are serving God in this.
    - a. He then exhorts us to rejoice where there is hope, to persevere in the face of tribulation, and to devote ourselves to prayer.
    - b. Finally, in Romans 12:13 . . . Paul reminds us that we are to contribute to the needs of the saints and practice hospitality.
    - c. Here again, hospitality is not the only thing, but it joins the list of ways we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.
  4. In I Timothy 5:9-10, Paul says that a widow is to be put on the list of those helped by the Church ONLY IF she is 60 years old or older, married once, having a reputation for good works, having had children, having shown hospitality to strangers, served the saints, assisted those in distress, and having devoted herself to good works. Once again, hospitality is one of the qualifying characteristics of authentic widowhood just as it is of authentic Christianity.
  5. And in writing to Timothy, Paul sets hospitality as one of the requirements for church leadership. We read this in I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8.
- C. Some of the costs of hospitality
1. Money, (2) time, (3) possibly less sleep, (4) extra people in the house, (5) consume more food than you usually use, (6) extra work – such

- as food preparation, cleanup after meals, laundry, house cleaning, (7) use more utilities (water, gas, electricity), (8) household furnishing or other items moved or misused or even broken, (9) sharing favorite things, (10) loss of some privacy – just to name some of the costs.
2. And it is probable that the costs of hospitality are part of the reason Peter exhorts us to be hospitable without complaint. And here it seems wise to remind you that complaining or grumbling is, at its core, a complaint against God and the way He is ordering your life or allowing circumstances to enter your life.
  3. Therefore, Paul says in Philippians 2:14-16 . . . Do all things without grumbling or disputing; [15] so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, [16] holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

#### D. Some of the rewards of hospitality

1. You just might entertain angels or truly important people (Hebrews 13:1-2) – as did Abraham, Lot, and Gideon.
2. You will receive additional blessings from God in this life, for He blesses those who give to others, (1) as did the Widow who was intending to cook her last meal for her son before dying, but showed hospitality to Elijah, and as result did not run out of oil and flour during the famine (I Kings 17:7-24), (2) as did the Shunammite woman who was barren, but was blessed with a son by Elisha's prayers (II Kings 4:8-37). Therefore the scripture says:
  - a. II Corinthians 9:6-9 . . . Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully . . .
  - b. Luke 6:38 . . . Give, and it will be given to you . . . for by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.
3. And finally, hospitality also brings eternal blessings for the life to come (Luke 14:12-14).

### III. Special (Spiritual) Gifts

- A. I Peter 4:10-11 . . . As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. [11] Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength

which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- B. This portion of Peter is in reference to what has commonly been called Spiritual Gifts, or the Gifts of the Spirit. These are the special gifts given to us and empowered within us by the Holy Spirit for service unto God. In verse 10, Peter makes three points about these gifts –
1. First, Peter separates the gifts of the Holy Spirit into two categories: speaking and serving. This is quite different from Paul, who presents us with a more comprehensive and specific list of spiritual gifts.
  2. Second, Peter exhorts us to use the gift given us for the benefit of others. This means our gift is not designed to benefit us, but others. And it is not given to us in order to define our place of importance within the church, but rather our place of service.
    - a. Christ is our example in this, for He came to serve, not be served. Therefore, whether our gift is simple or extraordinary, mostly practiced out of sight or in front of everyone, it is a reflection of what God has given us to do, rather than a reflection of our worth as a Christian or our importance in the Church.
    - b. And like Christ before us, we are to serve from the motive of love, and with an attitude of humility, and with willing self-denial, for it is these qualities that make our gift useful to God, and that through the use of our gift bring glory to God.
  3. The third truth we see in verse 10 is that like the parable of the talents, the gift given us is not ours to possess – as if ownership of the gift has been placed in our hands. But rather, the gift is entrusted to us by God and is to be used on behalf of God.
    - a. In other words, we are stewards of the gift, not owners.
    - b. This is an important truth, for we are easily tempted to treat our gift as if it belonged to us, and use it as if we are to gain some benefit or profit from it. However, our gift is not for personal gain. It is for the benefit of the church and the glory of God.
- C. In verse 11, Peter draws our attention to the standard to which we are to rise and the quality of service we are to provide in using our gift.
1. If our gift has to do with speaking, we are to rise to the standard of saying what God would have us say – which requires something from us beyond having a Spirit-given gift related to speaking.
    - a. For example, to speak the words of God requires living the kind of life that enables us to know and hear what God would have us say. And what kind of life is required for this? A Christ-like

life – which is why Jesus is the premier example of speaking the words that God gave Him to speak (John 12:49).

- (1) Therefore, beware of pride or any pursuit of self-glory in the use of your gift. And beware of the foolish belief that having the gift automatically ensures you will be speaking, or are speaking, God's words, for it is well documented that there are some who claimed to be speaking for God, but weren't.
  - (2) Now it is also true that apart from Jesus, none of those through whom God spoke were perfectly holy. So perfect holiness is not God's requirement. However, God does require a serious pursuit of holiness and measurable progress toward being holy in all our behavior as He is holy.
  - (3) Jesus addressed this issue of character determining the quality and worth of our Christian service when He said that many will say to Him on the judgment day, "Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name (*and cast out demons and perform miracles*)? But He will say to them, "I never knew you because you practiced lawlessness (*sin*). Therefore, depart from Me."
  - (4) The important point here is that we are not to look solely at the outcome of one's speaking to determine the spiritual legitimacy of what is said. We are to look where God looks, and that is at the spiritual quality and spiritual maturity of the person's say-to-day life.
- b. One final thought on this point, Jesus is not our only example, for from Moses, to the judges and prophets, to Jesus and His disciples, and on through the Church Age, down to today, God has spoken and is speaking through many of His servants. So if your gift has to do with speaking, then you have the opportunity of joining those through whom God speaks.
2. Back to verse 11 – if our gift has to do with serving, we are to serve by the strength of God.
    - a. But how do we do that? And how we are to know if we are serving by God's strength.
    - b. I believe the answer can be found in God's empowerment of Israel for taking the Promised Land. You see, God promised to empower Israel for the entire project, from that first big city, which was Jericho, to the last little village or nomadic group that was finally driven out.
      - (1) In other words, every battle Israel fought, they fought by the strength which God supplied. And the only time they lost that

strength was when they sinned against God, failed to repent, and went to war as if they were still in good standing with God. The little city of Ai and Israel's joining forces with foreign powers are the two most prominent examples of this.

- (2) My point here is that just as holiness ensured Israel would go to war by the strength which God supplies, so holiness ensures that we are serving by the strength which God supplies.
- D. To sum up this part about Spiritual Gifts, the Holy Spirit is the One who gives you your specific gift. And the Holy Spirit empowers the use of that gift, not simply because you have it, but because you are living as if the use of your gift is never to be separated from a whole-hearted pursuit of a holy life – whether your gift has to do with speaking or serving. May we value the Giver of the Gift more than the gift itself, and may we use the gift for the benefit and glory of the One who gave it to us.