

A Study of First Peter

Living to Glorify the Lord (1 Peter 4:7-11)

“Unless we are willing to pay the price, and sacrifice time and attention and what appear legitimate or necessary duties, for the sake of the heavenly gifts we need not look for a large experience of the power of the heavenly world in our work.”

~ Andrew Murray

I. An Introduction

Establishing that the end is near in verses 5-6, Peter returns to his call for believers to live in accordance to God’s will. In order to accomplish this task, Peter addresses their prayer life, their love for one another, and their use of their God-given gifts. Such instruction is not for their self-preservation in the midst of a hostile world, nor are these commands for the purpose of making Christianity more palatable to one’s culture; but rather, “their aim and motivation in all they do is to see God glorified through Jesus Christ” (Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 210).

II. Living to Glorify the Lord (4:7-11)

A. The Call to Examine Our Prayer Life (v. 7)

Two verbs are linked with this command to pray:

- *Be clear minded.* This term “carries the idea of maintaining a sense of promotion and keeping one’s head despite dangers and fears of the time” (Marshall, *1 Peter*, 142). Interestingly, the opposite of clear-headedness in the New Testament was drunkenness (see Eph 4:18). A realization that God is bringing history to a close should lead to prayer—“not the prayer based on daydreams and unreality, nor the prayer based on surprised desperation, but the prayer that calls upon and submits to God in the light of reality seen from God’s perspective and thus obtains power and guidance in the situation, however evil the time may be” (Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 156-57).
- *Be self-controlled.* Speaking of sobriety and restraint, this verb calls for a realistic view of the world and the need to be alert.

How exactly does being self-controlled and sober-minded aid our prayers?

B. The Call to Examine Our Love Life (vv. 8-9)

These next two verses call for believers to love one another. Note the following aspects Peter highlights:

- *Love must be preeminent in the life of the believer* (see 1 Cor 13:1-13; Gal 5:13-14, 22; Col 3:14; 1 John).

- *Love must remain consistent in the life of the believer* (1 Pet 1:22).
- *Love must serve as a means to forgive and overlook the faults of others* (Prov 10:12; Jas 5:20). Peter is not suggesting that love atones for one's sin. Rather, when a believer lavishes love on others, sins and offenses are overlooked. The basis for this interpretation is as follows: (1) this view fits with the emphasis on mutuality in the immediate context, (2) this view complies with Proverbs 10:12, and (3) this interpretation is consistent with the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 13:4-7).
- *Love finds one of its greatest expressions through hospitality*. The importance of hospitality is stressed five times in the New Testament (i.e., Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8; Heb 13:2). Such sacrifices are to be accompanied by a cheerful and giving heart. "Grumbling" or "murmuring" is seen throughout Scripture as an ultimate rebellion against the Lord and His divine will (see Exod 16:7-9; Acts 6:1; Phil 2:14).

C. The Call to Examine Our God-given Gifts (vv. 10-11a)

v. 10 - Observe what Peter states concerning our gifts:

- No believer is exempt. The Lord gifts each believer.
- Our gifts are to be used to serve others (see 1 Cor 14:3-5; Eph 4:12).
- Our gifts belong to God. These gifts are not ours; we are only responsible for how they are used. This also implies we cannot hoard or hide these gifts from the Lord.
- One size doesn't fit all. These gifts are varied.
- Our gifts are rooted in God's grace. Peter reminds his readers that we cannot earn these gifts. Thus, there is no room for pride.

v. 11a - Peter provides two general ways in which a believer's gifts should be used—speaking and serving. "In placing the gifts into the two categories of speaking and serving, all the spiritual gifts are included under these two clauses" (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 214-15).

The first category, speaking, calls for rhetoric that is in keeping with God's revelation. Ultimately, our wisdom and eloquent speech fails to change lives. We are obligated to be faithful in transmitting God's Word.

The second category, serving, entails God meeting our needs in order to see that the job is successfully completed.

A proper response to these two general categories—a faithfulness to God's Word and our dependence on the Lord in our service to Him—affords the greatest success. This success is not the exaltation of self or the glory of human ingenuity, but rather, this success is in the exaltation of God's glory or reputation.

The reference to "through Jesus Christ" indicates that the redemption brought about by Jesus and His present Lordship in our lives. As aptly noted by one commentator, "The whole of Christian experience takes place in the name of Jesus" (Marshall, *1 Peter*, 148).

D. The Call to Glorify the Lord (v. 11b)

While normally one finds a doxology at the end of an ancient letter, Peter cannot refrain from glorifying the Lord at the end of this section. Rather than translating this as a wish, the original wording in the Greek clearly reflects a statement of fact: God possesses glory by right (see Davids, 163). Peter adds “power” to highlight that the Lord is able to supply and sustain a believer in his/her spiritual journey.

III. Intersect

- A. The need to pray and the ability to love others comes far more natural when we realize we are to live our lives for God’s glory.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 -

- B. The use of our spiritual gifts must recognize our debt to the Lord. As one theologian noted, “To place ourselves in range of God’s choicest gifts, we have to walk with God, work with God, lean on God, cling to God, come to have the sense and feel of God, refer all things to God” (C. Plantinga).

Ephesians 4:1-6 -

Based upon these truths, select one of the below actions to address this next week:

1. Spend time in prayer each day this next week *thanking* the Lord for His grace in your life.
2. Spend time in prayer each day this next week *asking* the Lord to grant you wisdom and strength as you live for Him.
3. Explore one way in which you and your household could show greater hospitality (e.g., inviting a family over for a meal, hosting a neighborhood gathering, inviting an individual or family to your Thanksgiving dinner).
4. Meet with an individual who knows you well and is brutally honest with you. Ask them what they see is your spiritual gifting AND how you could improve in your stewardship of this gifting.

“Every good gift that we have had from the cradle up has come from God. If a man just stops to think what he has to praise God for, he will find there is enough to keep him singing praises for a week.”

~D. L. Moody

For further thought . . .

Based upon our study this morning, you may want to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:

Peter mentions only a few specific spiritual gifts in 4:7-11. Read Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 to find a list of additional spiritual gifts. After which, spend some time answering the following questions:

What do you think might be your strongest spiritual gift from God?

How does your use of your God-given gift benefit others around you?

How do believers around you suffer if you use your gift for the wrong reasons?

How might you specifically address the stewardship of this particular gift?