***Omega: BIB 109***

***1st Peter – Always Be Prepared***

***Lesson 13***

***I. Be Good Stewards of God’s Gracious Gifts.***

🡪 In the verses preceding our passage today we see how Peter exhorts us as Christians to support one another with a spirit of love and generosity. In this present section, 1st Peter 4:10-11, the Apostle completes that thought by calling attention to the fact that we all have gifts that we are supposed to use in serving one another. Here are two translations of these verses, first from the NASB, then from the ESV:

***1 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. (NASB)***

***1 Peter 4:1-11... “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (ESV)***

🡪 Most of the NT teaching about spiritual gifts is found in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Here we will draw upon that, as well as upon what Peter is telling us in these two verses.

***A. WHAT? What are Spiritual Gifts?***

1. In verse 10 Peter says succinctly and simply, “Each has received a gift.” What are these “gifts?” We usually call them “spiritual gifts,” but Peter uses no word for “spiritual.” The NASB says “special gift,” but there is no word in the Greek for “special” either. It is simply “a gift,” the Greek word charisma.

2. Usually when we think of ourselves as possessing some “spiritual gift,” we think of this as meaning that we have a specific ability or talent of some kind. This is a good beginning point, but it is not necessarily the whole story.

A. In 1st Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul uses the words gifts, ministries, and effects (operations, kinds of workings, activities) in a parallel way.

B. If we put these things together, we see that these are gifts that require us to do something that ministers to the needs of others. They are “ministering gifts,” or personal abilities that we can use in the church to serve God’s people.

3. Peter says that every Christian (each one) has received such a gift.

A. See... 1 Cor. 7:7 and Romans 12:6

4. In the NT there are four main listings of such gifts, all in Paul’s writings:

Rom 12:3-8; 1st Cor. 12:8-10; 1st Cor. 12:28-30; and Eph. 4:11

5. Theses verse indicate that there is a really wide variety of such gifts. This is why Peter bunches them all together under the description “the manifold grace of God.”

A. The variety of such gifts is indicated by Peter’s use of the adjective *poikilos*, which can be translated as “many-colored, of many kinds, various, varied, manifold.” Peter’s phrasing simply means that God’s ministering gifts come in many forms.

6. Though Peter rightly says that God’s ministering gifts come in a variety of forms, he himself mentions only two basic categories: “whoever speaks” and “whoever serves,” i.e., words and deeds.

A. Some gifts involve speaking. If that is your gift, then speak “as one who is speaking the oracles of God.”

1. This would apply especially to those who were given the temporary gifts that involved speaking inspired messages from God. In a secondary sense, even gifts involving faithful but non-inspired preaching and teaching must be grounded in the very words of God.

B. Peter’s other group of gifts is kind of a “catch-all” category. These are the gifts that do not involve speaking as such, but do involve meeting the needs of our fellow Christians.

1. Peter says in whatever way you are gifted to serve, remember that you are doing so “by the strength which God supplies.”

7. As we study the entire Bible, especially the NT, we find that the wide variety of God-given gifts need to be categorized or divided into two separate groups in two different ways.

A. First of all, when we are trying to identify the gift (or gifts) that God has given to us as individuals, we must distinguish between Providential Gifts and Spiritual Gifts.

B. This is especially true when we think of our gifts in terms of abilities or talents, i.e., the activities that we are especially good at.

C. It is important to see that most human beings have some such inclination or ability, but the mere possession of such an ability does not make it a spiritual gift.

1. Most people are born with some innate capability or aptitude or talent, or else have spent long hours in developing a specific skill or ability.

2. These abilities, whether inborn or developed, should be called providential gifts because they are present under the universal supervision of God’s general providence.

3. They are present in believers and non-believers alike; they may or may not be used in the service of God within the context of the church.

4. There mere possession of a particular ability does not make it a “spiritual gift.”

5. Many non-Christians have special musical talent, leadership abilities, and speaking skills. Many of these will become Christians.

8. So, what does happen when a naturally gifted or skilled person becomes a Christian? How does that talent become a spiritual gift?

A. The 1st step in to recognize that his talent is indeed a providential gift of God. James 1:17 and 1 Cor. 4:7

B. The 2nd step for that person is to prayerfully and submissively dedicate that talent to the service of God and God’s people.

C. The 3rd step is then to wait for the Spirit to give him or her a ministry in which the talent can be used. This usually happens through a call from the leadership of one’s congregation.

9. Spiritual gifts do not have to begin with providential gifts, though. They may do so, as described above. Sometimes this may happen in a dramatic way.

A. The Spirit may take an already-present, modest skill and heighten or enhance it for more effective service, as He did with the craftsmen who built the tabernacle in OT times. (Exodus 31:6) But even more dramatically, sometimes the ability to fulfill a Spirit-given task may be altogether a gift of the Spirit, which is certainly true of tasks requiring miraculous powers. This may happen, though, even when the ministry is not of a miraculous nature.

10. This leads us to the 2nd way that we must divide or categorize the total list of spiritual gifts. Again, there are 2 separate categories of gifts, distinguished by the kind of need they are designed to fulfill. These are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gifts, as differentiated from the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gifts.

11. There are sound reasons why certain spiritual gifts were needed in the earliest decades of the church, but ceased to be needed after that relatively short era ended.

12. The main factor that required these temporary gifts was the absence of a canon of NT Scriptures comparable to the OT which God provided for Israel.

A. In the early years of the church there was no written source of explanation of all things related to the New Covenant age, no written guide to the formation and life of the Church. Thus certain gifts were necessary in order to accomplish these purposes.

B. But once the written New Testament became available, these temporary gifts were intended to cease. 1st Cor. 13:8-13

13. Three different kinds of temporary gifts...

A. One was the office of apostle as such, i.e., the men chosen by Jesus to be His personal representatives in establishing the church following His ascension.

1. This gift is named in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11

2. That this gift was temporary is seen in Acts 1:21-26, where a main qualification for being an apostle was to have been a direct witness of the earthly ministry of Christ.

B. A second kind of temporary gift was gifts of revealed knowledge.

1. As long as the apostles were alive, they spoke God’s revealed Word to His people. But as the Church grew, the apostles could not be everywhere; so God equipped certain individuals in each area to be channels through which revealed and inspired knowledge could be passed along to the Church, until the NT writings became available.

2. These included the gifts of prophecy, the distinguishing of spirits, the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and the interpretation of tongues.

C. The 3rd kind of temporary gift was gifts of miraculous power. These were Spirit-bestowed miraculous abilities, which functioned as signs or evidence of the truth the Spirit was making available through the revelation gifts.

1. The former were needed only as long as the latter were needed, and the latter ceased to be needed when the written NT was completed.

2. The gifts of miraculous power included gifts of healing, working of miracles, and speaking in tongues.

14. Permanent gifts of the Spirit still bestowed today...

A. These are given in order to meet the needs of the body of Christ in every era of the Church

B. These permanent gifts fall into three main groups...

1. Gifts of leadership – leading, administrations, pastors – which relate specifically to the work of the elders of the church.

2. Gifts of preaching and teaching of the Word – teaching, exhorting, evangelists

3. General service gifts – helps, service, giving, showing mercy

***B. WHENCE? Where Do These Gifts Come From?***

1. The very name we use for these gifts – spiritual gifts – implies that they come from God the Holy Spirit, though 1st Cor. 12:4-6 show that the Father and the Son are also involved.

2. In any case, because they come to us from God, Peter reminds us that we are just stewards of them. A steward is a “house manager”, or “one to whom certain property is entrusted to be administered to the owner’s will and directions.

3. Indeed Peter says we must be good stewards of our gifts. This means that we must indeed use our gifts. We cannot let them lie fallow or unused.

4. And because they come from God, when we use them, it is as if God Himself is using them through us.

A. When we use speaking gifts, it is as if the words are spoken with God’s authority.

B. And when using the serving gifts, we are using the strength or abilities supplied by God.

5. Finally, as good stewards, we must use our gifts for the right reasons with the right motives.

***C. WHY? Why Has God Given Us These Gifts?***

1. First, we sue our gifts “to serve one another.” (to minister to one another)

2. Second, and more important, we use our gifts “so that in all things God may be glorified.” To bring glory to God should always be the highest goal or highest good we are seeking. Mat 6:33 & 1 Cor. 10:31

3. No wonder Peter closes this segment with a doxology: “To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen!”[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Entire Lesson pulled from: Studies in 1st Peter – Dr. Jack Cottrell. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)