



**BETHEL**  
PRESBYTERIAN

## **MINISTRY OF THE WORD**

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### **Living in Light of Eternity, Part 5**

1 Peter 4:7-11

Christ told His disciples:

Luke 9:24, "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

Colossians 3:2-4, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory."

Paul makes it abundantly clear:

Galatians 2:19-20a, “For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”

From these passages we conclude that all that we have, cherish, and possess as Christians is NOT owned by us at all! RATHER, it truly is owned and possessed by God for His purpose!

To get our head around this produces powerful living — for:

- It removes any and every “high stake” in life.
- It does away with the soil and fuel of greed.
- It makes us realize we have no right to any good thing in this life- for all that we are is bound up in Christ!

As a result, we become impervious to anything in this life which could threaten us! How it behooves us to wrap our heads around this simple truth — that our lives are not our own!

And such is the case when it comes to our spiritual gifts! As we have seen, they do NOT come from us. RATHER, they are giftings from the Lord! As such, it behooves us to be good stewards of them.

What does that mean? That is where 1 Peter 4 comes into play. With a pending world-wide persecution coming upon the early church, Peter closes this section by exhorting his brethren to be sure that they encourage and pray for each other. Truly, one of the greatest threats to Christians in this world is NOT persecution, BUT isolation (cf. Hebrews 3:12-13)! And so, Peter ends this section with a mini seminar on spiritual gifts whose sole purpose is the building up of the body of Christ. From this treatment we derive seven truths — of which we have considered the first five. Accordingly, notice with me a sixth truth, the by-product of the use of our spiritual gifts

1 Peter 4:11c, “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; so that in all things [speaking here of the exercise of our spiritual gift] God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...”

Did you get that? Yes, we confess that spiritual gifts are given unto the building up of the body of Christ. Yet there is much more to it. For a by-product of the use of our spiritual gift in this age is “God being glorified” — that is, God being seen to be of substance; recall the definition of ‘glory’ (כְּבוֹד [kabad])! Peter Davids wrote of this:

When gifts are used in this way, God’s power and will rather than human goodness or ability (whether in speaking or serving) will be seen, with the result that ‘in everything God

will be glorified through Jesus Christ.’ (Davids, 1990, p. 162)

When we exercise our spiritual gifting God is seen to be of substance — which is a big deal! In the ancient world, deities numbered in the hundreds (think of Egypt). And so when a battle was lost or a business ruined, it was understood that in the spiritual realm, your god was vanquished by a stronger god — which eventually could lead you to the exchanging of one deity for another. Furthermore, as gods were understood to be tied to geographical locations, when you moved or travelled, you generally paid homage to the local deities.

And so, if your life changed via marriage, children, grandchildren, and the like, you shuffled deities around when it came to your worship lest you offend the wrong deity and you lose a child.

From this it should be obvious that no one in the ancient world believed that their god was the chief god over all other gods. It would all depend on where you were, what you were doing, and what your life situation was. Yet that does NOT comport with reality! One of the most controversial statements Christ ever made was when He told His disciples in the upper room.

John 14:6b, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

In other words, I’m it! I am the only God and so the one and only one who ought to be worshipped, honored, and praised!

In this context, notice what Peter says here when it comes to our spiritual gift. When it is exercised the world (as well as you and me) see that God — our God, the only God — is glorious, of substance, and so is glorified! How is that?

In the opening chapters of Daniel (dated to 605 BC and beyond) we read of God’s work in and through four different young men. Through these men, God issued forth via Nebuchadnezzar some amazing statements to Babylon (as well as to the newly exiled Jews brought to Babylon in 597 BC and 586 BC).

Daniel 2:47, “The king answered Daniel and said, ‘Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.’”

Daniel 3:39, “Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”

Daniel 4:34b-35, “I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does

according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What hast Thou done?’”

Talk about amazing statements which God used to greet His people entering into exile in Babylon. Now what is rarely appreciated is that these statements came as the result of the use of spiritual giftings in these four men- like these:

- The Gift of Faith (Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, Daniel).
- The Gift of Service (Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, Daniel).
- The Gift of the Word of Wisdom (Daniel).
- The Gift of Discernment (Daniel).
- The Gift of the Word of Knowledge (Daniel).

Spiritual gifts operating in Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-Nego, and Daniel most certainly demonstrated the weight, substance, GLORY of God! Yet, how is that? We see it, but why? Hebrews speaks of ones who:

Hebrews 6:4-5, “...have once been enlightened [this doesn’t mean saved, but awakened to the reality of Christ] and have tasted of the heavenly gift [this is speaking of Christ and His ministry] and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God [this is talking about Spiritual Gifts: healings, miracles, teaching, exhorting, and the like! When those in the ancient world witnessed the execution of these gifts, notice what the Hebrew writer says here... they ‘tasted’...] the powers of the age to come.”

Did you get that? When a spiritual gift is exercised in the name of Christ, those witnessing the teaching/serving “taste” or experience future heavenly powers which God brings into this world via the spiritual gift! And yet, this just isn’t spiritual gifts! This is an important facet of Christianity. When a person comes to Christ, they participate in that which is otherworldly! For example:

Romans 6:23a, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life...”

What is “eternal life”? Literally it is “life pertaining to the age”. What “age”? The age to come! In other words, the life we will live in the next age does NOT begin when we die, BUT when we are redeemed!

Ephesians 1:13-14a, “In Him [Christ], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance...”

The word used here for a “pledge” (ἀρραβών [*arrabōn*]) is a down payment which in Christ’s day (as in our own) involved the purchasing and so possessing of something on credit. Here, that something is “our inheritance”! And so, in Christ we already are enjoying — via the “down payment” of the Holy Spirit — the inheritance that will come in its fullness in the next age! And

so Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit.

Romans 8:23, "...the first fruits of the Spirit..."

What is the significance of "first fruits"? They are the first and so the best fruits harvested from a field or orchard. They speak of something more and so serve as a fore-taste of what is to come! That is Christianity! It transforms the "redeemed's" existence such that today they have begun to live the life they will enjoy the rest of eternity! And so:

- Though our bodies and this world continue to decay, our "inner man" is "renewed day by day" (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16).
- Though we can't take it with us, nevertheless the material wealth we possess in this age can be used to "store up treasure" in the age to come (cf. 1 Timothy 6:19).
- Though this life and world someday will be destroyed, nevertheless today we possess and enjoy many of the benefits that will be ours in the coming Kingdom of God: like absolute assurance, joy, peace, perseverance, and so much more!

John Owen put it this way:

Spiritual gifts are... the powers of the world to come, those effectual operations of the power of Christ whereby His kingdom was erected and is preserved. (Owen, 2007)

With this, understand what Peter is saying here. When we exercise our gifts, the world/you/me get a "taste of the powers of the age to come" and so see that God is real/weighty/glorious!! He is NOT simply a concept or a religious ideal. RATHER, He is a God of substance!

## The Treasury of God's Grace

Picture in your mind a round room with seventeen doors in it. Now, each of these doors lead into God's Treasury of grace! And yet, because God's grace is multifaceted, each door is a distinct portal of God's grace: like teaching, exhorting, the word of wisdom, mercy, helps, administration, and the like. And so, though the doors represent different gifts, nevertheless, according to Hebrews 6 — each of the gifts serve as a portal of "the powers of the age to come" and so serve as a vehicle by which God grows, encourages, and so builds up His body.

Now, let's morph the picture just a bit. The room we just described does not exist. Rather, a select portion of the doors I just referenced (spiritual giftings) have been variously placed in the lives of God's people as a stewardship in their work of building up the body of Christ.

In this regard, when we use our gifts, the eternal intersects the temporal such that God is glorified and so seen to be of substance, weighty, glorious! And that is a by-product of the use of our spiritual gifting! It demonstrates that God is real, of substance, and so a Being with

whom we must deal! That brings us lastly to end (purpose) of our spiritual gift.

## The Telos of our Spiritual Gift

1 Peter 4:11c, “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; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Not surprisingly, Peter lastly tells us that the end and so ultimate purpose of every spiritual gifting is the praise, honor, and glory of Christ/God! As that is the case, do you understand what this means practically when it comes to the exercise and use of your gifts? The focus is NOT you and me, BUT Christ — “to Him belongs the glory [the praise] and dominion [the authority and so the demonstration that He alone is the one who reigns] forever and ever!”

In other words, not just now in this age, but throughout eternity future! This is incredibly encouraging. The ultimate reason you and I have been engifted is so that Christ/God might be honored through us! We see a beautiful picture of this in Revelation 3:12 and Temple Pillars.



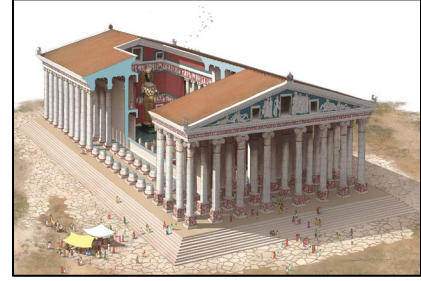
Revelation 2-3 contains seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor. The order reflects the path one would take if they walked the main, circular road on the west side of the region coming from Patmos. Each of the churches were real churches in the Apostolic Age. And yet, each also are representative of the kinds of churches that will exist throughout our current age.

Now of all the churches, Philadelphia was the faithful church! This body managed to keep in balance doctrine, their heart, their zeal, and their service in the Lord such that Christ only had good things to say about them. Unlike with the other churches, He gave no correction here! With that, listen to the commendation that Christ gave to the Christians in Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:12a: “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God...”

Do you know the primary purpose of a temple pillar in the ancient world? If you say “support” you would be wrong. Yes, many of the pillars were crucial in holding up the building. But the primary purpose of a pillar —in such edifices as these:

- The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus (one of the seven Wonders of the Ancient World) was to proclaim the greatness of Artemis! The structure had 127 pillars each of which were given as a gift of reverence from a king.
- The Parthenon had 69 such pillar --- many of which likewise were inserted to demonstrate the glory of Athens' patron god, Athena.



Now this is NOT to say that the pillars in an ancient structure were NOT for support; for clearly, they were! RATHER, it is to say that in the mind of the ancient Roman, the first thought that came to them when they saw a multi-pillared structure (such at the Temple Artemis or the Parthenon) was NOT support, BUT the glory and majesty of the deity it represented. Recall Paul's words to Timothy as he identified the church.



1 Timothy 3:15, "...the pillar and support of the truth."

Notice he makes a distinction between "a pillar" and "the support" of the building. And so again, while pillars do serve a supportive role, their ultimate purpose was to serve as a visual reminder of greatness and glory!

That is what we are in Christ this day! We are a vehicle through which God proclaims to all the world His glory, greatness, and majesty!

Now according to the text before us, one of the ways we do that is by utilizing the spiritual gift God has given us in Christ!

In this regard, we must understand once again that the spiritual gifting we have from God is NOT about us! Accordingly,

- If others respond to the exercise of your gift with indifference or persecution, what does it matter?
- If you should exercise your gift and no one notices, what does it matter?
- If in your ministry you work hard only to discover that your work is trampled upon, again, what does it matter?

At the construction site we call a church gathering, are you endeavoring to build an edifice to proclaim your glory or God's? If the latter, then it shouldn't matter how people respond to the particular gift that God has given to you! In the words of John, when it comes to our spiritual gifting — this means this:

John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

This truly is the telos of every spiritual gift!

That no doubt is why Paul prefaced his treatment of spiritual gifts in his letter to the Romans with this exhortation:

Romans 12:3a, "For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment..."-

When it comes to our spiritual gifting, it will NOT be difficult to look at what God has given us and use this to vault ourselves over other Christians! That is exactly what the Corinthians would do when it came to their spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:26b, "...when you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation..."

When this church gathered for worship or service, it quickly turned into a competition: who was the greatest?

Knowing that the ultimate end/purpose/goal of our Spiritual Gift is the praise and glory of Christ, we must ever and always remember what we were and would be outside of Christ! That is Paul's point here! So indeed! Let's use our gifts, BUT let's use them unto the praise and glory of Christ!