

THE END IS NEAR

1 Peter 4:7-11

So... Love And Serve

By

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Opening.

I want to take you to 1 Peter 4, to a section in vv. 10-11 where the Apostle appears to break the gifts of the Spirit down into two types— communication and service. Or if you prefer verbals, the action form of ideas as I do, *speaking* and *serving*. Let's begin by looking at the section which precedes ours, since it's part and parcel of the same passage, our immediate context.

Peter writes in 4:7, **“The End of All Things is near....”** *Wow*. That's a rather sobering statement, regardless of what Age in which it's read. Why can Peter say this, and say it so boldly? Because in the minds of the 1st century Saints, fueled by the writings of the Prophets and Apostles {Eph. 2:20 and 3:5}, the Return of the King was right around the corner! Any minute now... our God will make His *presence* felt, and His *power* known, among the nations of the Earth. **“Therefore** [From *oun*, ‘in *light* of this’ or ‘*because* the End is near and the King is coming’], **be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.”** Here's the purpose and the point to **“clear-mindedness and self-control:”** so that we may pray ...and powerfully!

“Above all [Notice, ‘Above *everything* else I have instructed you to do in this Letter’], **love each other deeply** [‘*intently, earnestly,*’ with all the passion of a world-class athlete ‘straining’ to win the gold], **because love covers over a multitude of sins.”** Does it ever. *Kalupto* means- ‘*cover* or *conceal* so that not a trace of sin can be seen, *throw a veil* of oblivion *over* the past.’

Peter's last word before a brief sermon on how to serve effectively in the Cause of the Kingdom is, **“Offer hospitality** [Which is literally what we warn our kids *not* to do, ‘*be kind to strangers, friendly to the unfortunate.*’ Only this graciousness and generosity is not to strangers, but:] **to one another without grumbling,”** vv. 8-9. It's a very simple directive. **If you're going to do good to the Family of Faith, and be gracious and generous to the Children of God, don't *whine* about it.** And don't go around *massab* and *meribabing* about it later! Sound about right? There are three concepts which come up over and over again in Scripture, three things which should characterize *Abba's* Children and identify us as Followers of Jesus: an open *heart*, an open *hand*, and an open *home*.

Two Types of Service.

In 1 Peter 4:10, Peter is writing to the persecuted Saints of Asia Minor and he says, **“Each one** [Greek *hekastos* means- ‘*each and every one,*’ making it explicitly clear that *no* Child of God is left out of *Abba's* plan for service in the Cause of the King. Therefore, ‘*each and every one of us*’] **should use whatever gift [singular] he [or she] has**

received....” *Charisma* is ‘a gift freely and graciously given;’ this is its base definition. However, in the New Testament it is the technical term for a spiritual gift {only place outside of Paul’s writings this word is used, by the way}. And how should we “use” our gifting, how should we “employ” {NAS} what’s been so graciously given us? “**To serve others.**” There it is: “*serving one another*” {NAS}.

Then he explains this service with the phrase: “***faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.***” I love this term: *poikilos* means- ‘multi-colored.’ You see, grace comes to us in many forms, many fashions and many colors, but it always has the same source, it always flows through the same channel— the *love* of *Abba*, from the *heart* of our heavenly Father. May we have the humility to recognize it when it comes to us; “**the eyes to see**” it, “**the ears to hear**” it, “**and the hearts to know**” it {Deut. 29:4}.

This idea of ‘faithful administration’ is from *oikonomos*, from *oikos*- ‘house,’ and *nemo*- ‘administer or arrange.’ He was the *manager of a household* or *estate*, usually a freed-man or a slave given responsibility for the rule and management of the household affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, for direction of the other slaves, and supervision of those children under age {included doling out their daily portions: Isa. 22:15; Lk. 12:42}. The word *oikonomos* speaks of the proper function, usage, and ordering or arrangement of something *entrusted* to your care.

An overseer of the ancient world, the steward of one’s estate, had little to no wealth of his own. **He administered his master’s wealth according to his master’s will.** You following this? Let me give you three simple lessons we can learn here. [i] **You are administering the grace God has given you to the other slaves— i.e., your spiritual gift to other believers in the Body.** [ii] **To fail to minister, to reject the responsibility given you to serve, is to fail in the ‘rule’ entrusted to you; it is to fail to feed the Children entrusted to your care.** [iii] **Other slaves are going hungry because of your refusal to serve in your gift or in any gift!**

“As each and every Saint has received a *charisma*, a gracious gift from God, put it to use in serving one another [This is how both the *power* of the Spirit {‘For you, O God, are *strong*...’} and the *love* of Jesus {‘and you, O LORD, are *loving*’} are manifested in the Body.] **as excellent overseers of the multi-colored grace of God,”** 1 Peter 4:10 {RR Exp}.

The Breakdown.

We have two phrases coming up: “**if anyone speaks**” and “**if anyone serves.**” Peter, in v. 11, is going all the way back in his mind to Acts 6, to what was a necessary division of service for the early Church to advance. For the Faith to progress as *Abba* intended, to break down the racial barriers between Jew and Gentile, a division had to be made

in the arena of service between those who would “**serve**” in practical matters— like the distribution of food and finances for the poor— and those who would devote themselves to “**prayer and ...the ministry of the Word**” {Acts 6:2-4}. So, as a solution you have the first deacons taking their place, the first *servants* of the early Church, and a refocusing of the Apostles on their sole priority and responsibility: **prayer and the Word of God.**

1 Peter was written around 65 AD, after all of Paul’s great discourses on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. I find it interesting, since Peter began this section by commanding us, above all else, to “**love each other deeply.**” And what does this kind of love do? **It serves— anyone, anywhere, anytime— selflessly and sacrificially.** What I find fascinating is Paul’s two great discourses on gifts {Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12} are followed immediately by divine depictions of love and strong warnings to *never* separate our service from it. What Peter gives us are two basic ideas governing gifting in the Age of Grace:

- I. **Every believer has a gift from God and— at least according to this passage— that gift is singular.** It was possible, as evidenced by the Apostles, to possess more than one gift in the early era of the present Age {30-96 AD}, or possible, even as it is now, to function in the power of the Spirit of Grace outside one’s own gift. I’m not personally / theologically opposed, nor do I think Scripture is, to the Sons of God having more than one gift. What I am opposed to is those who think they have *all* of them! Or that this is even a necessity, in any Age.

Think of this from a practical standpoint. **Inherent in the gift— your gift— is the ability to execute the Mission.** A logical question to ask is: **Why would you need more than one gift?**

- II. **Peter seems to be saying the breakdown of gifting by the Spirit of God comes in two types: speaking and serving.** What doesn’t fall under the guise of a ‘speaking gift’ {such as pastor-teacher, teacher, evangelist or exhortation} is a ‘serving gift,’ and vice versa.

Moving on to v. 11, Peter says, “**If anyone speaks....**” From the present active indicative of *laleo*- ‘to *discourse*, to *proclaim*, to *communicate* something.’ Peter uses this form of *laleo* for ‘anyone who faithfully and consistently *communicates*.’ And “**when**” he does, “**he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.**” *Logion* essentially means- ‘*divine communication*,’ i.e., God’s revelation to man: the same word Paul uses in Romans 3:2 for the Jewish custodianship of divine revelation in the Age of Israel. Peter’s emphasis here is on the fact that the one exercising a ‘speaking gift’ is to *laleo logion*— ‘*speak* the Word of God,’ faithfully and consistently communicate it, *proclaim* it, *discourse* upon it. This defines the scope of the ‘speaker’s service’— the ‘proclaimer’

or ‘communicator’s’ *ministry*— in very lucid, very direct and, frankly, very elementary terms.

“If anyone serves....” The verb *diakoneo* means- ‘*wait upon as a servant, attend to others’ needs*’; *diakonos* is where we get the word ‘*deacon*.’ The *diakonos* was a servant in the ancient world, not a master— he was a table-waiter, one who executed the commands of another. Both “ifs” here are first class conditions: they are statements of truth, statements of fact, ‘*whens*’ rather than ‘ifs.’ So, **“when anyone faithfully and consistently serves, he should do it with the *strength* which God supplies.”** And as anyone who’s ever stepped outside their own pain, heartache, and disillusionment long enough to serve someone else, to minister to the wounds and weariness of others, can tell you: **God generously and abundantly ‘supplies’ for His Servants.**

Ischus, the word for “**strength**,” means- ‘*inherent strength, might or power*’ {displayed power}. Out of approximately five different Greek words in the NT for power, might and authority, this is the strongest. Literally, **“by the displayed power of God,”** His omnipotence manifested in the lives of His Children. So, once again, we see not only does the Holy Spirit bestow the gift, but if our service is to be effective at all for the Kingdom of God, *He* must *empower* the gift. The Lesson? **God supplies the strength to execute His Missions. Since He has *equipped* you to serve, He will *empower* you to serve.**

Finale.

The end result, the final meaning toward which Peter is moving: **“so that in *all* things [‘in the exercise of every gift and in the serving of every Saint’] God may be praised [‘glorified’ {NAS}] through Jesus Christ.”** This gives us the goal of all saintly service. It also reminds us of our Lord’s words in Matthew 5:16, that **“Your [plural, ‘collective, communal’] good deeds”** are to **“glorify your [plural again = ‘you all’s’] Father in Heaven.”** Think about it. **If *that’s* not the goal, then it’s not *His* glory.** “Hmmm, whose is it?” Well, I’m glad you asked. **It’s *ours*.** Matthew 6:1-4 is another section of Scripture which illustrates the distinction between serving *God* and serving *self*.

“Through Jesus Christ” simply means through the members of His Body carrying out His will. **“To Him [‘to’ Jesus Christ the King] be the glory and the power [the ‘dominion’ over all!] for ever and ever. Amen,”** v. 11. Amen, indeed. The **“End of All Things is near,”** hovering over Humanity you could say, ready to descend at a moment’s notice. **So love fiercely and serve faithfully ...like Time and Eternity depend on it.**