

# STEWARDS OF GRACE

1 Peter 4:10-11

## INTRODUCTION

- The “Miracle Fruit” berries have properties that, when eaten, affect the taste buds of the tongue, so that will cause sour foods to taste sweet, for up to 30 minutes afterwards
- Many people are searching for the “Miracle Fruit” of life that will somehow transform the sour and bitter experiences that we all face into sweetness:
  - ✓ They consume alcohol and drugs in an attempt to drown their sorrows
  - ✓ They go after false religions, meditation, mindfulness to relieve their pains
  - ✓ They pursue hobbies or sports to escape their problems
- Yet all of these eventually fail to remove their misery
- There is, however, one (and only one) “Miracle Fruit” of life that can fully and permanently transform every bitter experience of life – trials, afflictions, sicknesses and even death – into perfect sweetness
- The name of this miracle is the grace of God
- The apostle Paul received this grace which enabled him to “*take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) and to say, “to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21)
- God’s grace is his favour to the undeserving; it is his gift, given freely, at no cost to the recipient, but at great cost to the Giver
- It has been described as *God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense*
- The apostle Peter wrote this letter to persecuted saints who had suffered for their faith, and would yet suffer worse to come

- What might Peter give such people in such a situation?
  - ✓ Stock up on food, ammunition, and build a bunker to survive the coming holocaust?
  - ✓ Change and soften your Christian message to make it more agreeable to the world?
  - ✓ Keep your Christianity a secret, stop proclaiming it to others, stop gathering with the church?
  
- No, he reminds them that “the end of all things is at hand”, and rather than retreat in their faith, they should advance in it, with a sobriety of mind, a watchfulness in prayer, fervency in love and benevolence in generosity to the brethren (vv.7-9)
  
- Then in these verses, he directs their attention to the spiritual gifts God has given to the church in his grace, and the vital necessity to employ those gifts for the edification of the body and to the glory of God
  
- Far from being a deterrent to faithful service in the church, the imminence of the end of the age should be a motivator to our duty to the brethren, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)
  
- In these verses we learn of the stewardship God has entrusted to us, and our responsibility to use the gifts we have received from his gracious hand

## **I. THE ALLOCATION OF THE GIFTS**

### **A. The nature of spiritual gifts**

1. The word for gift is *charisma* – a divinely conferred endowment, freely given
2. A spiritual gift is a God given ability for service
3. It is not a natural ability or talent
4. The gifts are given for the edifying of the church (1 Corinthians 14:12)

5. As the members of the church have needs, God has ordained they be met through their fellow-members, whether they are spiritual, emotional or physical
- B. All believers are gifted by the Spirit
1. “Every man hath received the gift”
  2. There is no article (“the”) in the Greek, so the sense is that every believer has received a gift, not merely a few in the church
  3. The Spirit divides his gifts “to every man severally as he will” (1 Corinthians 12:11)
  4. The idea of only some being “in the ministry”, while the rest of the church are not, is foreign to the New Testament
  5. Every believer has a gift, therefore every believer is to minister
- C. These gifts are from “the manifold grace of God”
1. The gifts (*charisma*) are aspects of God’s grace (*charis*)
  2. Manifold (*poikilos*) means many-faceted or variegated
  3. God’s *grace* is manifold
    - a. Common grace (Acts 14:17)
    - b. Prevenient grace (John 6:44; Acts 16:14)
    - c. Justifying grace (Ephesians 2:8)
    - d. Helping grace (Hebrews 4:16)
    - e. Instructing grace (Titus 2:11-12)
    - f. Sanctifying grace (Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)
    - g. Comforting grace (John 14:18)
    - h. Strengthening grace (Psalm 27:14) (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)
    - i. Restraining grace (Jude 24)
    - j. Delivering grace (Matthew 6:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13)
    - k. Restoring grace (Hosea 14:4)

- l. Reviving grace (Psalm 85:6; 138:7; Isaiah 40:31)
  - m. Persevering grace (1 Peter 5:10)
  - n. Dying grace (Acts 7:55-60)
4. God's gifts are manifold (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:11-12)
    - a. Prophecy – The ability and desire to preach God's Word; to forth-tell, proclaiming (1 Corinthians 14:3)
    - b. Ministry/Helps – The ability and desire to serve and help God's people
    - c. Teaching – The ability and desire to teach God's truth; explaining God's truth that transforms
    - d. Exhortation – The ability and desire to encourage others in their faith; motivating others by words or acts
    - e. Giving – The ability and desire to give to God's work and God's people
    - f. Ruling / Government / Administration – The ability and desire to lead and administrate part of God's work
    - g. Mercy – The ability and desire to feel the pain of others and help them during trials
  5. Note that the apostolic "sign gifts" of prophecy, healing and tongues have ceased and are no longer in operation (1 Corinthians 13:8; 2 Corinthians 12:12)
  6. Peter in v.11 summarises the spiritual gifts into two categories: *speaking* gifts and *serving* gifts
  7. Since the gifts are of God's grace, there is no place for pride in them (1 Corinthians 4:7; 15:9-10)
  8. Since the gifts are of God's grace, there is no place for complaining in them
  9. In the church, there is no such thing as an insignificant gift – all are important and all are vital (1 Corinthians 12:22-23)
  10. We are to minister the same to one another – we all need to minister, and we all need to be ministered unto

## II. THE APPLICATION OF THE GIFTS

A. These gifts are a stewardship

1. A steward is one who manages the affairs of another
2. The picture is that of a house in which the owner has appointed various stewards with various responsibilities, and given them the resources to fulfil those responsibilities
3. The house is the church, God is the owner, the stewards are the members and the resource is God's grace
4. The parable of the talents illustrates the stewardship of the Christian (Matthew 25:14-30)
  - a. All received talents, yet in differing quantities (Ephesians 4:7)
  - b. Each servant was expected to use his talents to their fullest potential
  - c. There is a day of reckoning when the servants must give account to their Lord for stewardship
5. While they are gifts of God's grace, we are not to be passive with them, but actively put them to work
  - a. We are to "neglect not the gift that is in thee" (1 Timothy 4:14)
  - b. We are to "stir up the gift of God which is in thee" (2 Timothy 1:6)
6. God gives his grace *to* us that it might work *through* us

B. We are to speak as the oracles of God

1. This would apply to gifts such as prophecy, teaching and exhortation
2. Oracle (*logia*) means a divine communication, a revelation

3. Many teachers who claim to speak for God speak nothing but “vain jangling” (1 Timothy 1:5-7)
  4. Our own words from our own opinions can provide no real or lasting help to others
  5. Preachers and teachers must “preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:2)
  6. When we provide counsel to others, it must be based upon the word of God
  7. When we provide comfort to others, it must come from the word of God (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- C. We must minister in God’s strength
1. This would apply to gifts such as helps, giving and mercy
  2. “Ability” (*ischus*) means strength or might
  3. God does not require of us more than we are able according to his gifting
  4. “Depend on it. God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” (Hudson Taylor)
  5. In our own strength we will faint and fail, but in the Lord’s strength we will persevere and succeed (Isaiah 40:29-31)

### **III. THE ADORATION TO THE GIVER**

- A. All things are for the glory of God (Hebrews 2:10; Colossians 1:16)
1. Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever
  2. While some might argue that spiritual gifts are for the edification of the body of Christ, this is but a means to an end
  3. By edifying the church God is glorified

4. There are many in ministries today who, like the Pharisees, minister for to be seen of men, to receive the praise of men
5. The true steward of God's grace cares not for man's recognition, only his heavenly Father's
6. It is truly humbling to realise that God would take an unprofitable, unworthy sinner, and transform me into a vessel of honour, a channel of his grace, that I may now be used to accomplish the greatest possible honour a created being is capable of – the glory of God
7. Through Jesus Christ – the only way such a miracle of grace is possible is through the mediatory work of Christ

## B. Doxology

1. Peter by inspiration seems to become enraptured in these thoughts of the glory of God and closes this section with a doxology to God
2. Praise (*doxa*) is glory
3. Dominion (*kratos*) power, might (cf. Revelation 1:6)
4. Amen = so be it

## CONCLUSION

1. Consider where we would be, were it not for the grace of God, and give him praise for it
2. Have you received his grace in salvation, trusting in Christ's atoning blood?
3. If every believer has been endowed with a spiritual gift, are you aware of what yours is?
4. Are you using your spiritual gift for the edification of the body and the glory of God?

5. This cannot be fully accomplished without an integral connection to the body of Christ, the church
6. May we be conscious of the solemn responsibility as stewards of God's grace who must give account on the great day, and employ our talents faithfully and diligently to the glory of God

*Behold the gifts God doth bestow  
To saints redeemed by Jesus' blood.  
No human glory do they show,  
But testify the grace of God.*

*So use the same to one another,  
As faithful stewards of his love,  
'Tis not for thee but for thy brother,  
He gave the gift and bid thee serve.*

*Thy speech fill with the words of light,  
God's oracles thy mouth apply,  
And labour not in fleshly might,  
But in the power of his supply.*

*To God the Father glory raise  
In all things, through his blessed Son,  
To whom be endless might and praise,  
Amen, so let it thus be done.*