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19 | 1 PETER 4:1-11

THE CRUCIFIED LIFE AND THE ABUNDANT LIFE

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PETER: FROM SELFISHNESS TO SELFLESSNESS

Open your Bible if you will to 1 Peter 4. We are again in our study of 1 Peter. What a fascinating book. Peter, the apostle to the Jews is writing from Rome. He's about to be imprisoned. The first great Gentile persecution of the church is on it's way. Rome is burning as Peter writes this. The Roman emperor Nero is going to blame Christians.

Peter is going to tell us in 1 Peter 4 all about **self-denial**. Peter naturally was a man who did not deny self, but something powerful happened to him at Pentecost, and he lived the rest of his life empty of self and full of God. God wants to give us a **life with his fullness**, but that means we need be **empty of self**.

Tradition tells us Peter and Paul preached together in Rome before they were put to death by Nero. Nero became emperor of Rome in 54AD at age 16. He reigned until he was 30, death by suicide. He was a maniac of a young man. Things were fairly peaceful for Christians for the first ten years of Nero's reign, but he desperately wanted to tear down Rome and rebuild it in his name, it is said he had it burned down and then **blamed** it on the Christians.

Christians as a result suffered great persecution. Peter's letters were completed after the fire of Rome which occurred in 64AD. The fire destroyed more than 70% of the city. As a consequence of this tragedy, and the widespread belief in Nero's complicity, the emperor became the brunt of intense criticism. Tacitus, a Roman historian tells us Christians were torn to death by dogs, others were crucified, still others were set on fire to illuminate the night. Nero would throw the children of Christians in bags with vipers. He would ride around the arena dressed as a charioteer in his chariot with Christians waiting in the middle of the arena for the lions to be released, when they would be torn to pieces.¹

According to Josephus, the Jewish historian of the time, Peter was arrested two years after Nero's fire in September of the year 66AD and rotted in the Mamertine prison for nine months. The Mamertine prison was a cruel place, where Peter was chained to the wall in shackles. He wasn't alone. He likely was imprisoned with the apostle Paul who was beheaded in January of 67AD. In June of 67AD Peter faces his own death.

LEARNING SELF-DENIAL

Peter writes the epistles of 1 and 2 Peter in the midst of all this persecution. He likely wrote 1 Peter just before the persecution began, but suffering is clearly on the horizon. Rome is burning. Upheaval is beginning. There is a disdain for Christians. Peter in his chapter 4 teaches us the importance of self-denial and the crucified life. The whole point he makes in 1 Peter 4 is this: **the crucified life is the abundant life**. Do you believe that?

Peter's Death. Self-denial became a way of life for the apostle so that at his death he asked to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die like his Lord. He

¹ Tacitus. *Annals* (XV.44).

addresses this idea of self-denial powerfully in our text in 1 Peter 4, that we will read in a moment.

Peter Not Good at Self-Denial. Yet Peter was not always a proponent of self-denial. When our Lord **at Caesarea Philippi** explained to Peter and the other disciples how he would “go to Jerusalem and suffer many things... and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (Mt 16:21), what did Peter do? He rebuked the Lord. That’s what the Bible says. He rebuked deity! “Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you’” (Mt 16:22). What did our Lord say to Peter? “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Mt 16:23).

Do you hear what Jesus says to Peter? He’s got a problem “**setting his mind** on things of God.” He’s thinking in a worldly, selfish way. Jesus is thinking selflessly.

The Garden of Gethsemane. Peter had to learn this lesson when our Lord was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. He did not want to deny self. This is not a natural thing for Peter or for anybody. Self-denial is the result of a revelation of the Holy Spirit. So Peter at Gethsemane thinks he’s going to save the Savior. Think about that. He unsheathes his sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus the servant of the high priest.

In Caiaphas’ Courtyard. And remember while Jesus was being mocked and beaten by the scribes and priests at the high priest’s house, Peter was in the courtyard denying Jesus three times. He did not want to deny self, so he denied Jesus.

I could give several more examples, Peter did not naturally gravitate toward self-denial. None of us do. Something happened to Peter.

Pentecost. Something profound happened to Peter. The Spirit of God changed Peter dramatically at Pentecost. Remember he had given up, but the Lord restored him. For the rest of his life, he is not looking to self. He’s not filled with self anymore. He’s filled with God. He’s filled with the Spirit of Christ. Look at the boldness. He’s thinking about others.

This fullness of God is what should characterize every Christian. So Peter when he writes his first epistle, in chapter 4, he gives us the secret to self-denial.

Let’s listen to God’s Word. 1 Peter 4:1-11, “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God. ³ For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does.

⁷ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹ 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.”

This is God’s Word.

SUFFERING SOMETIMES HARDENS PEOPLE

Peter says arm yourself with a crucifixion mindset, and you’ll be done with sin. I want that. I need that. I need to be “**crucified with Christ**” so that I can have the fullness of God.

That’s **not the normal response** for most of humanity. Often suffering makes people bitter and hardened. But it’s different for a Christian. A Christian is armed with a weapon Peter says. We are able to deny ourselves because of union with Christ. We are dead to the delights of the world when our mind is on Christ.

The message this morning is simple: **self-denial is the pathway to fullness in God**. Let me put it another way. Denying self is a small sacrifice for a full satisfying life of joy and usefulness for God. This is Peter’s challenge to us. You can never be truly happy until you deny yourself and follow Christ. I want to show you this.

1. THE CRUCIFIED LIFE DESCRIBED (4:1-6)

1 Peter 4:1-11, “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.”

DEFINITION OF SELF-DENIAL

Self-denial is “denying the self-life of sin.” The purpose of self-denial is the abundant life of the Spirit. That’s why Peter says, if you are living the crucified life as Christ did, you have ceased from sin. You “no longer” live “for human passions, but for the will of God.” Hallelujah!

The Emptiness of the Self-Life. I bet if we had a testimony time right now, we could all confess the emptiness of the self-life. It’s just not worth it. Sometimes it’s the emptiness of this world’s entertainment. It does not satisfy. Sometimes it’s the ugliness of anger and getting our own way. Sometimes it’s just forgetting God.

“Ceased from Sin” explanation. Saints, that’s no way to live! I want to live a life that has “ceased from sin.” Of course, Peter doesn’t mean sinless perfection. That’s impossible while we are on this earth. Jesus says, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Lk 9:23). That’s what Peter is talking about here. As Christ suffered in the flesh (crucifixion) so we are to live the crucified life.

OUR GREATEST WEAPON

The Great Weapon. Peter begins with the example of Jesus: “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking” (4:1). Wow, Peter looks at this as one of the greatest weapons of the Christian life. Paul says the same thing:

“Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and ...be renewed in the spirit of your minds” (Eph 4:22-23).

In 1 Peter 4, this word **“arm yourself”** is used in the NT to refer to “weapons” of spiritual warfare. “For the **weapons** of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Cor 10:4). The word picture of the Christian as a soldier is common in the New Testament which constantly tells us we are soldiers in a spiritual battle.

Commentator **Kenneth Wuest** writes, This word is “used of a heavy-armed foot soldier who carried a pike and a large shield ... The Christian needs the heaviest armor he can get, to withstand the attacks of the enemy of his soul.”²

Not on Vacation. “Arm yourself with the same thinking” as Christ. Peter’s point is clear. Christ has not sent us into the world as **vacationers** on a self-guided tour of the playgrounds of this world, but as **soldiers** on a tour of duty in a battlefield. We are not called to kick back, relax, take in the scenery. We are in a fierce conflict on foreign soil. We need to **arm ourselves** with spiritual armor to withstand the temptations of this world (cf **Eph 6:10-18**).³

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:11).

Paul says, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Tim 2:4).

We need to die to the pursuits of this life. Our only ambition is Christ and him crucified. Paul said it this way: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). That’s the life I want to live: the crucified life. All of Jesus’ life he lived not for

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS (4:1-2)

Peter says arm yourself with the Savior’s way of thinking. How did our Savior think? What was his view of the world? Did he live for this world? No, he lived for the will of God. He says “arm yourself with the same way of thinking.” What kind of thinking? **Verse 2,** “to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.” That’s **self-denial**. That’s the **crucified life**. And self-denial, ironically, gives you the good life, the full life. If you deny yourself of your worldly passions, you will have a heart full for God and others. It’s the only way to live. The Savior lived not “for human passions, but for the will of God.” Peter says “arm yourself with the same way of thinking” (vs 1).

Jesus Devotional Life. Peter knew the Lord well. The Lord often stayed with Peter in his home in Capernaum. Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law of a deathly fever there. One thing you do in a Jewish home is you always feed the guests. Jesus comes to Peter’s home and there are no matzo balls! All he sees is a lady on a shelf in a ten-by-ten-foot room. I saw that room, part of several rooms in Peter’s home. Jesus heals this woman and

² Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 2:110.

³ Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter*, Swindoll’s New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 212.

It's says immediately after she was healed, "she began to serve them." They had a great meal afterward! Matzo bread and matzo balls!

In Capernaum where Peter lives, there is a synagogue 150 yards from his home. You can go there today. The foundation dates to the time of Peter. **Mark 1** says Jesus was teaching in this very synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath when a demonic spirit interrupted him, and he healed the man. By night time, multitudes of people had been brought to Jesus. It says, "The whole city was gathered together" to Peter's door (Mk 1:33).

So, Jesus, likely utterly exhausted, goes out early in the morning to a desolate place to meet with his Father. "And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed" (Mk 1:35).

Two Choices on the Shelf: Our Lord lived a life of self denial. It began every day meeting with his Father. That's what God wants for us. He wants a life of fullness of God, which means we need be empty of self. How about you? Is your life full of self or full of God? There's just two choices on the shelf, serving God or serving self.

Arm Yourself. Jesus armed himself with the purpose to do the will of the Father. Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (**Jn 4:34**). Arm yourself with that thinking, that purpose for living.

Peter says, "whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God" (4:1-2). Plenty of people who suffer in the flesh get worse in their sins. But those who die to self as Christ died cease from sinning. Paul says, "I die daily" (**1 Cor 15:31**). Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (**Lk 9:23**).

THE EXAMPLE OF YOUR PAST LIFE (4:3-5)

So we saw the example of Jesus. He lived a life wholly devoted to God, the crucified life. And the crucified life is the full life. We need to deny the emptiness of self so that we can have the fullness of God.

You experienced this when you made an exodus from your **past life**. You used to live a life of emptiness and excess. Peter says, "For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; ⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (4:3-5).

The Evidence of the Spirit. Self-denial is the mark that the Spirit of God dwells within you. If you have no power over sin, then God is not dwelling in you. This is a mark of conversion. Listen, if you love the world, you don't know the Father. "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world" (**1 Jn 2:15-16**).

There is a radical change when we come to know Jesus. It's so radical that our friends now malign us. They think we are crazy. They can't understand. They are "surprised."

Our "BC" Period of Life. Before your spiritual birthday in Christ, many of you lived out your former way of life—"sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry" (**4:3**). Peter's list isn't exhaustive, but it paints an ugly picture of

many believers' "BC" years. When we consider that most people in the world still live in this "BC" period, it shouldn't surprise us that they expect everybody to speak their foul language, follow their distorted mind-set and customs, and uphold their corrupt cultural values. When we don't conform, they notice.⁴

When you are born again, you get a whole new way of living. You lose your friends and sometimes your family. But you have a whole new forever family.

Crazy for Christ. Your old friends, Peter says, are "surprised" at your new life, and they "malign you" (4:4). They think you are crazy. "With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you" (4:4).

There's not only a war of wills among your family and friends, now there's a war of sanity. They often don't think you are just "different," they think you are "crazy." It says, "They are surprised ..." It's a word that's really quite a **strong** word. They will consider you absolutely **bizarre**, bonkers, out of your mind. As a result, you're going to have lots of abuse heaped on you.

1 Corinthians 2:14 says it all, "But the natural person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It takes a divine revelation from the Spirit to understand why you live the way you do.

THE EXAMPLE OF THE MARTYRS (4:6)

Then, in verse 6, Peter gives an example of the martyrs who have died. This is the ultimate self-denial. There are people all around the world who every day are giving their lives for Christ. In most of the rest of the world, being a Christian means being an outcast. The world hates Christ.

Peter alludes to the martyrdom of Christians. It seems that the great Nero persecution has begun. He speaks of those who are "now dead" and who have been "judged in the flesh." What's he talking about? The dead are those who had heard and believed the gospel but had died by the time he wrote.

"For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does" (4:6). The word "way" could also be translated "realm." Christians are judged, the way people are, or perhaps a better translation, "in the realm of men," so now they live "in the Spirit, in the realm of God" (HSCB). He's referring to martyrs.

Peter says "this is why the Gospel was preached to the martyrs." This Gospel is a powerful Gospel. It allows you to die to the selfish part of you so that you are able to even give your life for Christ if necessary. Saints, that's the power of the crucified life.

Remember the words of Jesus, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (Jn 15:18-19).

When Christ was crucified, were his enemies successful? No, he rose on the third day! So we believers die to this world, and many die physically, but death doesn't kill us ultimately. When we die, we enter in to the eternal life of the Spirit.

⁴ Swindoll, 213.

If you are living for self as a pattern in your life, you are not living the Christian life. You need to die to self so that you can live.

2. THE ABUNDANT LIFE DISPLAYED (4:7-11)

What does a life of self-denial look like? Ironically, according to Peter, it's a life of fullness. It's the **abundant life**. It's a life of serving God and others. That's what he says in 4:7-11.

Peter now gives many examples of how Christians should live in light of the crucified life. We are no longer living for self but for God and others. Self-denial is important, because it frees you for fullness. Jesus says in **John 10:10**, "I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly."

1 Peter 4:7-11, "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.⁸ Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:¹¹ 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."

THE FULLNESS OF OUR WALK WITH GOD

Self-denial is important, because it frees you for fullness. Peter begins, "The end of all things is at hand" (4:7a). What? He wrote this 2000 years ago. That doesn't seem like the end. Peter is referring to the last age before Jesus returns. We are living in it, and Jesus can return at any time. Christ's return is near. He can come at any time. "Therefore..." live a full life for God. Don't bother living for yourself. That's a waste. That's your old life. You can never live that way anymore. Live the full life in God. The crucified life is the full life. It's the abundant life.

Peter now turns to the fullness of the life in God. He says we need to live the crucified life "for the sake of your prayers" (4:7b). "The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers" (4:7).

You will wake up with the weight of the world on your shoulders if your focus is not on the Lord. You've got to "**be self-controlled**," directing all your thoughts to the Lord. Be "**sober-minded**" – "setting your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (**Col 3:1**).

Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles. I want you to really understand the importance of your prayers, your walk with God. You've got to cut off whatever it takes to make your walk with God priority. You need to "be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers" (4:7). Look over at **John 7:37**, "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.'"

The Feast of Tabernacles is one of three national festivals in Israel. This year it's in the last week of September. It's a remembrance of the exodus and the wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, when God took care of his people: their shoes and their clothes did not wear out for 40 years. So the people are living in man-made shelters.

And on the last day of the feast, the high priest goes down to the pool of Shiloam, the great reservoir of water coming from the Gihon Springs. And the high priest fills that basin of water and brings it back to the Temple, and pours it out, to remember the **water that came out of the rock** for God's ancient people.

And here in the midst of 30 to 60 thousand thirsty people, Jesus stands up and says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (Jn 7:37-38). And then John explains, "Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:39).

Do you have this fullness of prayer in your life? Do you have this walk with the Spirit?

THE FULLNESS OF OUR SERVICE FOR OTHERS

Peter then says, that in denying ourselves, we live an abundant life in another way. We are able to serve others. He says (**vs 8**) "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins" (4:8). We are to "keep loving one another" even though they may constantly offend us. You'll never do this unless you are living the crucified life. You will abandon ship if you are a consumer Christian, living for what others or this church or that ministry can give you. Peter says, here's the test to see if you are living the crucified life: can you forgive people? Can you get along with them after they've offended you a "multitude" of times?

Love One Another

Family of Porcupines. People are difficult, aren't they? I heard of the story of a family of **porcupines** that wanted to live together. While they were together they had warmth. They had courage. But they didn't live that way very long, because they kept sticking one another. So they decided to live separately. The problem was, that was a life of cold and loneliness. It left them open to the prey of wild animals. They realized this, so they decided to come together again. But it wasn't too long before they were offended with each other because every one was sticking each other. So they decided to live separate. Until cold and lonely and frightened, they decided to come together again. I could go on and on. But if you think about it, this is the story of the church.

Consumer Love vs. Covenant Love. As believers, we need each other. Jesus says our unity is the evidence to the world that Christ has come. Peter says, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins" (**4:8**). What is love? Is it a feeling? Sometimes we feel love for one another. But love is not mainly a feeling. It is a commitment. "God so loved the world that he..." felt this overwhelming feeling of admiration for the world. Is that love? God didn't love the world for what the world could give him. That's **consumer love**. God loved the world for what he could give that vile bunch of sinners. That's **covenant love**. So love one another, not for what you get out of it, but for what you can give. That's agape love, covenant love.

A Multitude, Oceans, Full of Sins. This kind of love covers a multitude of sins. What's that mean? How many sins do you have? How many sins do you need forgiven? Mountains. Heaps. Oceans filled with sins. We are to forgive others the way God has forgiven us.

You don't really know if you love someone, unless you've stayed with them enough where you have forgiven them multitudes of times. Have you forgiven? Are their broken relationships in this Body? Are you loving your forever family and covering a multitude of sins?

Show Hospitality toward One Another

Then Peter really pushes us hard as far as love goes. He says, "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling" (4:9). Grumbling?! *Having people over is too much work!* Yes it's a lot of work. *People drain me!* Sometimes they do. I'm sure I've drained plenty of people in my life.

Peter says, don't just say you love people. Live the crucified life. Have people over. Don't just say you love people. Live life with them. That's the test to see if you are crucified with Christ. When is the last time you had people over to your home?

Maybe you as a man can have a group of men from the church over and just have a time of fellowship, the word, maybe some board games. What about you ladies having a ladies' night? Go bowling, or whatever ladies' do. Do something! Not shopping, ha! But do something together ladies. Encourage one another. Eat together. There is something about having a meal together that displays our love and unity.

Are you really living the crucified life? Then you'll be showing hospitality to the saints. Don't make excuses or start grumbling. That's the display of the crucified life. It's the abundant life!

THE FULLNESS OF OUR GIFTS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Finally, Peter ends by saying we need to exercise our spiritual gifts in the realm of the local church. So if you've been following, he says, the crucified life is the abundant life. And it is displayed in your (1) prayers, that is your walk and worship with **God**, (2) your walk with other **Christians** in their person life, and then (3) your walk in the local **church**, exercising your spiritual gifts.

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ 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" (4:10-11).

Boeing 747: All the Parts. Every part in the body of Christ is necessary. There are thousands of pieces in a Boeing 747. Take off a wing! Take off the landing gear. Take out one of the engines. The truth is, just like in an airplane, in the Body of Christ, you need *all* the parts!!

Each Member is Responsible to Exercise their Spiritual Gifts

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied [multi-colored] grace." We are going to give an account to use our gift! A steward is not an owner. You are using something that belongs to someone else. Your spiritual gift belongs to God. You need to use it for him.

Spiritual Gifts Differ

Peter says, be “good stewards of God's varied [multi-colored] grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies” (4:10-11).

Peter says, there are two kinds of gifts: gifts of speaking and gifts of serving. If you speak, speak “as one who speaks oracles of God.” Don’t hold back. This is God’s message. Don’t edit it. Don’t speak for people. Don’t tickle their ears. Speak with authority because this is God’s Word.

And if you have the gift of serving, then let God supply your strength. Serving God in ministry can be exhausting, so you need to depend on God’s strength, living the abundant life.

Spiritual Gifts Should Be God Centered

Peter says the purpose of spiritual gifts is to bring honor and glory to God. They exist “in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (4:10-11).

Ichabod, the Glory has Departed. I think of **Hophni and Phineas**, the two sons of Eli. They used their spiritual office and gifting for themselves. God told them to burn all the fat off the sacrifices, but they disobeyed. They liked the savory pieces of meat. They disobeyed the Lord. It seems their father, who was high priest was aware of this, and the Bible says, “he was a very heavy man,” so he might have been part of this. But God told Eli through the boy Samuel judgment was coming because, “his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them” (1 Sam 3:13).

The Tabernacle stayed at Shiloh for 369 years, until God brought judgment to Eli and his two sons. One day, the Philistines came in battle against Israel and burned the Tabernacle down. That day Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phineas died. That day Phineas’ wife had a baby. As she was dying, “she named the child Ichabod, saying, ‘The glory has departed from Israel!’” (1 Sam 4:21).

On the other hand, I think of Israel and why God chose them. He chose them because they were nothings. They had nothing to add of themselves. Anything they have is from God. That’s how it is with the church of Christ. We are nothings. Anything we have is from God. Let’s use it for his glory. **Whether you are a teacher**, then tremble at God’s word and not at people. Speak the truth in love. Be filled with the Spirit when you speak. And **if you are someone who serves**, whether in music, setting up and tearing down for fellowship, washing dishes, serving in the nursery, being hospitable, praying or giving, do it with God’s strength. On those days you feel so **puny** and without strength, **let the joy of the Lord be your strength!**

Conclusion

So, let me sum up this message. It’s very simple: the crucified life is the abundant life. How long will you continue Christian, in a life of emptiness? You have Christ and all his power and kingdom, yet you are dry and dead on the inside. Let this be the moment you renew your first love. Self-denial is a big commitment, but it’s the only way to the abundant life.

Invitation

As the music begins to pray I want you to give you the opportunity to surrender your life anew to God. Don't go another day in selfish living. Give up on your life. Go to your own funeral today. Let the life of Christ flow through you.

If you are here without Christ, come to him today. Don't delay. He says, Come to me all who thirst! Come and I will give you a river of life flowing from your belly. I will give you the Holy Spirit. Talk to me or one of those at the back of the church waiting to pray with you.

Just as I am / I Come Broken