

**S007**

## **1Peter 4:10-11**

### **A true church is a prism of servanthood**

#### **1Peter 4:10-11**

**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.*

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There is no genuine Christianity without the work of the Holy Spirit. He is active across the entire spectrum of a Christian's faith, life, and experience.

And we can't truly be the Lord's congregation without Him.

Furthermore, the New Testament places special emphasis on His work in enabling the body of Christ to function like a body. Every member has a function. To the extent that members are passive passengers, the body is crippled.

So, let's talk about the gifts of the Spirit (Gr. *charismata*) by working step by step through our text – 1Peter 4:10-11.

#### **"Gift" (Gr. *charisma*)**

# The New Testament uses the Greek word 17 times. It refers to *a gift or grace bestowed by God's undeserved love*.

Often, it is used as in 1 Peter 4:10: "The special abilities that the glorified Lord Jesus Christ gives to every member of His body through the workings of the Holy Spirit, so they can glorify Him by building up and expanding His body." (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4,9,28,30,31; Eph 4:7-11. Possibly also 1 Cor 1:7; 7:7; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).

Additionally, there are entire sections in the Scriptures that deal with the *charismata*: Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12-14; and Eph 4:7-16.

Furthermore, many places describe how these spiritual gifts were practiced, especially in the Acts of the Apostles.

Around 18-20 different *charismata* are mentioned in the above-mentioned passages. However, we shouldn't think in terms of a complete and closed technical list of gifts. The Scriptures simply provide typical examples of what was experienced at the time.

# Without implying an unqualified value judgment or endorsement of all contemporary movements (that's not the current discussion), it must be said that a

living congregation is inherently charismatic in nature.

*The free, spontaneous, and pulsating exercise of the priesthood of all believers  
is one of the marks of a true New Testament church*

# Christ, through His Holy Spirit, sovereignly imparts these gifts to each person as He wills, as is suitable and necessary at a particular moment.

## **"Each"**

The Scriptures emphasize that every individual who is part of the body of Christ receives one or more charismata (1 Cor 12:11,18). Each has a place and function in the congregation. Everyone is needed, has a calling, and no one is superfluous.

This truth places significant responsibility on both members and leaders. A clergy-centered church where the pastor is a paid official who does almost everything is not biblical. Pastors' task is to equip the members for their service (Eph 4:12). They should actively encourage, stimulate, and channel the priesthood of the believers. They should make themselves as redundant as possible. This last statement needs qualification. It does not imply that the ideal congregation should become a herd that can do without shepherding. That would not only be overly idealistic but also unbiblical. Every flock need shepherds - elders, and typically among them a teacher or teachers. The New Testament doesn't remain silent about this. Such elders and teachers also need specific gifts. As they faithfully and dedicatedly exercise them, they also become gifts to the congregation.

The above can only become a reality in congregations made up of true believers. After all, only people who have received the Spirit can be equipped with charismata.

## **"As" (Gr. *kathōs*)**

In Greek, this word indicates a qualitative and quantitative variety.

Some people are simply more gifted than others. Some have more gifts than others; some have gifts of higher quality, greater usefulness, or more influence than others.

But equally important is to emphasize that no gift is more elevated or "spiritual" than another. In Christ's body, no one is inferior or superior (1Cor 12:14-25).

*Unity in the Lord's body  
is not expressed in uniformity  
but  
in diversity functioning harmoniously*

It's like a symphony orchestra. Each instrument has its own sound and "tune" (as it were). But when all play in harmony, the result is greater than any single instrument alone.

## **"Serve" (Gr. *diakoneo*)**

The charismata are not toys or trophies but tools. They are given to us to serve our brothers and sisters, and, of course, often the world outside. Regardless of the direction of my service, it ultimately serves the Head of the church and glorifies Him.

Without mutual love, everything in the congregation is in vain. Then, the orchestra is no longer playing a symphony; it's just making a noise. Then the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and faith are worth nothing (1Cor 13:1).

## **"Stewards" (Gr. *oikonomos*)**

# This word refers to a slave who was responsible for overseeing his master's property, household, and interests. The concept could also be translated as "managers."

OF a steward, two things are always true:

He has a certain authority within certain boundaries.

He is accountable for how he carries out his task.

Both aspects always go hand in hand. They cannot exist independently.

Some discretion and authority are given, but it's within boundaries.

+ For example, if I had a farm but could not live on it because of various other responsibilities, I would appoint a manager. Within certain limits I would give him full mandate – authority to make certain decisions. However, he would have to take accountability for it, and report to me regularly on these matters.

# Likewise, every Christian has a lot of freedom in the use of their gifts.

Positively, he or she has to make his own decision about when, where and how to exercise these gifts. He must pray about it, develop his gifts, and obtain clarity about the Lord's calling in his life. (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).

Negatively, he must be careful not to extinguish the Spirit's work in his life.

# The Bible is clear that every Christian will give an account to the Lord for the life he or she had lived. Surely this includes one's charismatic stewardship."

## **"Varied" (Gr. *poikilos*)**

The word "*multiple*" suggests a great variety, especially a rich and multicolored diversity.

This helps us understand this truth by thinking of the congregation as a prism on which God's mercy shines like rays of white light – which the prism then breaks it up into the visible and beautiful *spectrum* – all the colors of a rainbow.

To use another picture: If a body of believers zealously exercise their gifts, God's mercy becomes something beautiful like the tail of a flaunting peacock before the eyes of the world.

But, to the extent that members hide their gifts under a bushel, to that extent the reality of the Lord's merciful involvement in a body of believers is hidden.

## **Speaking and serving to the glory of God (v.11)**

# The extensive variety of gifts is divided into two main categories: speaking gifts, and the gifts of serving.

Yes, there are those people who are gifted in both areas. But very often people are either a talker or a doer.

Yet, the talkers sometimes have to roll up their sleeves. And sometimes doers have to speak. Whatever one's gifting, we should be willing to serve in any area wherever the need might be.

# The purpose of our charismatic activity is *"that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."*

Too often, the focus is on displays, sensations, and experiences.

# Peter concludes with praise: *"to Him belong glory and dominium forever and ever. Amen"*.

The Greek is meaningful: This praise belongs to God in the *"aeons of the aeons"* – dispensations times dispensations. It is the superlative to its highest order – for all eternity.

### **In closing: *Some practical pointers***

#### **1. *Part of God's grace for the congregation and the world is entrusted to me***

This grace must be delivered in the right context and address, like a good steward or a diligent postman. If I fail to do so, I deprive others of a portion of God's grace. I become an unfaithful servant. If I am faithful, I help display the spectacular beauty of God's grace, and the Lord will be glorified in and through His body.

What we are talking about here is the life in and of the body of Christ in a nutshell. It lies at the heart of true church life and is one of the Lord's ways of accomplishing things here on earth and glorifying Himself.

Pastors and elders should not hold the reins too tightly. There is a time to let the people go, even in the worship service. They should be trusted, and the Lord should be trusted through them. It's often because pastors are too focused on correctness, professionalism, and prescribed liturgy that little or none of the congregation's charismatic nature comes to expression. It's what makes worship services easily turn into stifling routines.

#### **2. *Often, Christians wonder what their gifts are***

# If you follow the following guidelines, you won't have to wonder for long:

+ Be God-centered and Christ-focused.

+ Pray regularly about your charismatic gifting, your place in the body, and your calling. Then get up and start moving.

+ Ask yourself the following questions: *What do I enjoy the most? What kind of service almost comes naturally to me? What gaps in the congregation do I see that need filling? What do I do well—better than most? What do others think of my giftedness?*

+ Do what is in front of you; do your duty. Serve your brothers and sisters wholeheartedly. Be a foot-washer. Instead of asking what your gifts are, ask how, where, and who you can serve. You will, as it were naturally find your niche in the congregation.

What is more, you typically see the need to act through the lens of your giftedness. If the necessary boldness and freedom exist, people will without even realising it themselves, often fill gaps according to their charismatic wiring.

+ Remember: if you have the vision, you have the work.

+ Don't be afraid to step out in faith. Faith in action is spelled: *Do! Dare! Expect!*

Peter would never have walked on water if he hadn't stepped out of the boat (please don't read too much into this example; it can be dangerous, especially if you can't swim!). Some people are so afraid of making mistakes that they prefer to do nothing at all. They bury their talents (Matt 25:24-30; Luke 19:20-27).

We all make mistakes sometimes, but if we want to succeed, the Lord is always close by, as He was to Peter.

+ It sometimes takes years for certain gifts and ministries to reach maturity. We grow through practice, study, prayer, experience. And by making mistakes!

In this regard, it is often wise, even essential to wait on the Lord! Certain ministries cannot be practiced immediately. You must wait on the Lord, and the body of Christ to acknowledge it. And before that takes place, you do not have the Lord's green light.

+ Know your non-gifts. Unfortunately, we all have many of those.

*If you love your brothers and sisters as you should  
serving and washing their feet  
the charismata will flow almost spontaneously from you*

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