



Christian Duty in a Hostile World

1 Peter 4:7-11

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33:49

Good morning. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year's. I'm surprised to see so many people, survivors here from the holidays. At my house this morning, the relatives are packing up and leaving. Several relatives, my son came from Texas with his wife and five dogs.

34:19

And my dogs. So my dogs having a great time. The house needs remodeling. We're glad to see you here. In a couple days, we're going to be ending this year. And this is kind of the time of the year where we look back and see how we did this year and how successful we were at some things and maybe not so successful and other things we tried to accomplish.

34:48

So this morning, we're going to be in the epistle of 1 Peter. And Peter's going to give us some instructions, some basic instructions so that this time next year we can look back and say, yeah, I did a lot better.

35:08

Things like how close our walk was with the Lord and how we've honored Him, the important things in life, not the temporary things that occupy us so much. So we're gonna be in chapter 4 of 1 Peter and we're gonna be in verses 7, only five verses, chapter 4 verses 7 to 11, but we're gonna get there slowly.

35:39

So everything in our Christian life can be boiled down to the statements that Peter is giving us in these five verses. So before we dig into the text I would like to introduce the theme by referring you to another text taken from the Gospel of Luke.

36:01

Chapter 14 verses 27 through 33. Whosoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which one of you when he wants to build a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it.

36:28

Otherwise when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish all who observe it begin to ridicule him saying this man began to build and was not able to finish. Or what king when he sets out to meet another king in battle will not first sit down and take counsel whether he's strong enough with 10,000 men to encounter the one coming against him with 20,000 or else while the other is still far away he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace.

37:03

So therefore no one of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. So without going deeply into that particular text at least we can understand from that that nobody should become a follower of Christ without counting the costs. And the implication of that is that the cost is very high.

37:32

Being a Christian demands a high price. It's costly to follow Christ and we remember a couple of parables the parable of the treasure in the field and the parable of the pearl of great price. In each case, the man sold all he had to purchase the treasure and the pearl.

37:53

In the case of the rich young ruler, Jesus asked him to take everything he had and sell it, and to give the money to the poor. But that was too costly for him. And Jesus told some would-be disciples that he expected them to drop everything and immediately follow him at the cost, at whatever business they were involved in.

38:20

And Jesus confronting those who became his disciples said, drop your nets, follow me, give up your way of life, in exchange for following me. So not to discuss the cost of salvation any further, but I would like to remind you of a truth that was spoken of by a religious philosopher.

38:41

His name was Soren Kierkegaard and he said this, it costs a man even more to go to hell. Yes, the way of a disciple may be costly, but the way to be a disciple is not hard. It's costly but not hard. Jesus said, take my yoke upon you and learn of me.

39:06

For my yoke is what? Easy and my burden is light. So to reject salvation, to reject being a disciple of Christ is to choose the hardest way. That life is a life of guilt, a life of unanswerable questions, a life of hopelessness, and at the end eternity in hell.

39:33

So to follow Jesus is costly but Jesus says it's easy and that's the paradox of discipleship. In fact, John tells us in 1 John 5-3, he reminds us that his commandments

are not burdensome. We are called to be disciples of Christ to obey his commandments and the Bible gives us very clear instructions on how to do that and we get the power of the Holy Spirit to help us fulfill those commandments and our result will be joy.

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Now we live in a complex world and nobody would argue that but the foundations of the now will take us to the simple basic foundational elements of living a Christian life. So let's read them together verses 7 through 11, verse Peter 4.

40:40

The end of all things is near therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. Above all keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint as each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

41:08

Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God. Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies. So that in all things God may be glorified through Christ, Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever, amen.

41:34

Now before we look at our text, let me give you another introductory thought. And that's that I believe that one of the characteristics of the Christian life, of our new nature, is we have the desire to do what is right.

41:52

We want to do what God has asked us to do. And we see the classic illustration of that would be in Romans chapter 7 with the great Apostle Paul. He sees sin as something he doesn't want to do. He says, I find myself doing things I don't want to do and the things I want to do I find myself not doing.

42:17

O wretched man that I am, he's crying out for help because like him we all are incarcerated in this flesh. And so the desire is there but doing what's right is not always easy. We have the desire to do what's right but that's not enough.

42:39

The longing to do what is right is to bring to realization what God wants us to do to assume that just wanting it is sort of like the child that wants to become somebody else. So maybe a little kid, he wants to be a Major League Baseball player when he grows up.

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So he has a hero and so he gets a little uniform just like his hero. He gets that little bat and he has a picture of him and he stands in the backyard and he practices standing like his hero. He practices swinging his little bat just like his hero.

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Or maybe he has an uncle that's a fireman and he really idolizes his uncle and he wants to be a fireman. So he gets a fireman outfit on, he runs around the house with a garden hose trying to be a fireman.

43:38

But wanting doesn't get that, does it? Wanting is not enough. Somehow that child has got to begin with the ability and the capability to pursue a life of preparation. Spending time and energy building.

43:56

that foundation habits. Practicing the fundamentals over and over again. Think about our worship team here. We have some wonderful musicians and singers but they didn't just

show up this morning. Bill didn't just show up start pounding on the piano and this beautiful music came out.

44:18

No, it took years of practicing over and over the foundation and the basic principles to be able to perform. Not ability to perform is not because of a strong wish but the depth of our preparation. Now most of us we have a vision as it were because we can see the image of Christ in the Word of God and we have a desire for spiritual excellence but sometimes we don't have the daily discipline to produce it.

44:56

That's why many of us come apart at the seams in the time of crisis. We would like to find a shortcut, we would like to find a quick course in spiritual strength at the time of emergency. But the only way that the yoke is easy and the burden is light is when we have been prepared by the discipline of walking in obedience to the principles of Christian living.

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No shortcuts, no quick fixes. I'll read to you a quote by Dallas Willard, writing in a book entitled, The Spirit of Disciplines. He says, on the spot, episodes are not the place where we can, even by the grace of God, redirect un-Christlike but ingrained tendencies of action towards sudden Christlikeness.

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Our efforts to take control at that moment will fail so uniformly and so ingloriously that the whole project of following Christ will appear ridiculous to the watching world. So to behave like Jesus, that is our goal, but to be able to do that is the result of daily discipline.

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Jesus said in Luke 6.40, only after he is fully trained will a man be like his teacher. Now all of that to say this, Peter presents here for us a pattern for daily living, summarizing how we are to live as believers.

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So Peter here is going to give us three very basic elements that we need to build godly lives. And Joshua, oops, got my notes twisted up here, build godly lives. So the three things here, and that's our outline.

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The incentive to our spiritual duty, the instructions and the intention of our duty. So now how are we to live? The first point comes in verse 7, the incentive. The end of all things is at hand. That's the incentive.

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The end of all things is at hand. When he says end, he's not talking about the cessation. It's not a chronological idea. He doesn't mean termination as if something stops. He means consummation. It means to reach the goal.

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The achievement, the purpose, it's fulfilled. Another way to put it is the idea of a goal achieved or a result attained. It has the idea of an ultimate destiny, an outcome or fulfillment, and that has to mean the return of Christ is what he's talking about.

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So the incentive for holy living is to live in constant expectancy of the return of Jesus Christ. We must live as if Jesus is going to return at any moment. It also could be read, the end of all things is about to arrive.

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Let's go to the second point. From the incentive, now comes the instructions. Verses 7 through the first part 11 give us the instructions for godly living. Peter's going to show us how to conduct ourselves on a day-to-day basis so we build the right kind of habits to make us strong.

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The right kind of habits that will enable us to say the yoke is easy and the burden is light. Here are the patterns for these commands. There's three categories, personal holiness, love, and service.

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The first, personal holiness, has to do with our relationship to God. That's our vertical relationship. The second, love, that has to do with our horizontal relationship, our relationship with others.

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And third, service. That expresses our responsibility to fulfill what God has called us to do. The ministry within the body of Christ. Holiness, love, and service. So let's talk about the first one, holiness.

49:56

Notice verse seven, therefore, he says, because the end of all things is near, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. So sound judgment and sober spirit would mean that our life is so pure and right that our communion with God is unhindered.

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The statement, be of sound judgment or self-controlled literally means to be in one's right mind, not to be carried away by the wrong view of yourself, as explained in Romans

12:3. This is the same word that Mark used to describe the maniac that Jesus freed from the legion of demons in Mark chapter 5.

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When they found a man who said he was in his right mind after Jesus cast out the demons. So we must be fixed on spiritual priorities and righteous living. When the children of Israel had come through the desert they were about to enter the Promised Land.

51:12

And they were going to have success and victory. And as they were entering the Promised Land their leader Joshua gave them a commandment. Joshua chapter 1 verse 8, Joshua tells them this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have success.

51:49

To be of sound judgment is the idea to keep your mind safe. To borrow a statement from Paul in Colossians he says set your affections on things above and not on the things of the earth. Everything proceeds out of our mind.

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Proverbs tells us as a man thinks so he acts. But Peter's not done. He adds sober spirit. This is a close synonym. It basically means to keep your head clear to take things seriously to be alert. And what's the purpose of sound judgment?

52:33

For the purpose of prayer. Why? Because holiness flows out of a direct communion with the holy God. And when our communication is blocked by a cluttered mind or our minds are knocked out of balance by pursuits of the world and worldly desires we will be unable to pray effectively.

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Nobody knows this better than Peter. He was a good illustration of a man who experienced a less than desirable prayer life. You remember he traded sleep for prayer in Mark 14? So if we're to pray effectively, we must think biblically and spiritually as well.

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So says Peter, the Christian life summed up is as simple as this. Think God's thoughts. What does that mean? It means every day in the Word of God. That's how we know the mind of Christ. Every day in the Word of God, meditating, thinking, absorbing God's thoughts.

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Thinking biblically leads to personal holiness. Now the second area which is of concern to Peter here is this matter of instructions. has to do with love. Look at verse 8 of Peter 4. Verse 8 says, above all keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins.

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Be hospitable to one another without complaint. So here Peter turns from the vertical part of holy living from before God to the horizontal aspect of loving. And he's primarily concerned with our relationship here with other Christians, our relationship with other Christians.

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You say, well, isn't he concerned about evangelism? Yes, he is. And you remember the words of Jesus, if we love one another, by this shall all men know that we are his what? Disciples. How we love one another, how we treat one another is the substance of our witness.

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The world is watching how we act to one another. The world has nothing like we have. They don't have this love like we're capable of having. That draws people to Christ to see how we respond to each other.

55:14

And notice the importance that he gives it in verse 8. He says, above all, first an importance in terms of relationships is love. So after you've strengthened your relationship with the Lord through study of the Bible, the word of God and communion with the Lord, so we think with a biblical mind and a prayer life that prepares us for any crisis, then it says we should be able to keep fervent in your love for one another.

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Keep fervent. That's a great word, fervent, because it's an anatomical word. It means to be stretched or strained. It's used of a runner who is running at maximum output. We probably, many of you watched the Olympics this summer.

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And you've seen those sprinters, they were giving 100% stretching and straining to break that tape. Maximum output. It's also a term that's used of a horse. A horse racing with its strenuous muscles reaching as far as it can stretching things to the limit.

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That's how we're to love one another. Not this sloppy agape. No, how do I stretch? It's the kind of love that requires all of our spiritual muscles. Stretching to love the unlovely, to loving our enemies.

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That's how we love. love our enemies in spite of being rejected, in spite of being treated hostile. The people that the church that Peter was writing to were going through

tremendous persecutions by Caesar and Nero and this Peter's telling them to love their enemies.

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This is the kind of love that is defined in 1 Corinthians 13. It can take anything from anybody anytime and it believes the best. So why should we love one another this way? Verse 8, because love covers a multitude of sins.

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You might have noticed that we are not perfect and as long as we're in this fallen flesh we will sin and the only thing that's going to ride over the top of that and keep us together is love. Now Peter if you will remember back in the Gospels thinking that he had arrived at the point of spiritual maturity thinking he was more generous than anyone else said to the Lord how many times shall we forgive?

58:11

Seven? And no doubt he was patting himself on the back because the Talmud said three times so he doubled it and added one thinking that he'd arrived at spiritual maturity. The Lord said Peter how about 70 times seven?

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So this is the heart of the church and if we take care of this we fulfilled the whole law right? The whole law. Now Peter goes one step further here in this matter of love in verse 9 he says be hospitable to one another without complaint.

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The word here means to love strangers. I think he adds this because we have a tendency, we're not having a problem loving our friends and our family, we cover the sins of our friends, but he's saying would you please extend that love to strangers.

59:11

And then finally as we come to verses 10 and 11 we're going to talk about the third element service. This is a large subject so let's convince, condense it here in a few minutes we have left. Peter says as each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another.

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So that's where we start. Peter said you start with the right vertical relationship, you follow up with a horizontal relationship with others that engages us into a life of effective service. So from inward holiness to outward love which produces spiritual service.

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Verse 10. Verse 10 says we're to be serving but how? That's the question. How am I to serve? Now this word serve is a very, very mundane word. It means literally to wait on people. That's what it means.

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It's the word *dikanao* which is used of a table waiter worse than that, a busboy. So we are to give our lives in serving one another. So the question is how am I to do that? Verse 10. Verse 10 tells us that each one has received a special gift.

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So there's the tool for service. We are to serve one another through the means of a special gift. So what's the gift he's talking about? So before we look at that let's go back in the text and take this at one piece at a time.

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So first of all the extent. What's the extent of these special gifts? As each one he says has received a special gift. So every Christian has a special gift. You do, I do. Peter says that each one has received and there he describes the extent of this gift or we call them spiritual gifts.

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Now if you would turn with me for a moment to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 I would like to reinforce this by showing you what Paul says through the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 12 Paul's talking about the same subject.

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Verse 1 says now concerning spiritual gifts. Verse 4 says there are varieties of gifts. But verse 7 says to each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good. In other words, every believer has a spiritual gift, a spirit-given gift.

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And in verse 11, but one and the same spirit, the Holy Spirit works all these things. Now listen to this. Distributing to each one individually as he wills. Notice verse 12, for even as the body, the body of Christ, like a physical body is one, and yet has many members.

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and all members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. So his point is that you have a physical body and every member in your body has a function to perform. So the same thing, that's the analogy, the same thing in the body of Christ.

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We all have a part to play in this body. And the body says, verse 14, is not one member but many. The idea there is so is the church. We are unique, there is no one like us. We are like spiritual snowflakes.

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So when the Spirit of God gives gifts to every believer, he gives them individually to each believer. Absolutely peculiar to that believer. By the way, the word individually is *idios*. What word do you think we get from *idios*?

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You're right, we get the word idiot. What does idiot mean? That's a Greek word that means peculiar. Paul, in writing his letter, the Corinthians called them peculiar people. Christians are peculiar people.

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It means there that there's nobody like him and it came to be used of people who were mentally incompetent because they're odd, they're peculiar, there is no one like them. Now you say, wait a minute, I read in 1 Corinthians 12 that there's just a few gifts listed there and then if you look at Romans 12, you have another list of gifts but there's just a few suggested there.

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So for example, in Romans 12, you have prophecy, service, exhortation, giving, lending, showing mercy. There's only about a dozen listed there. So how are you going to divide about a dozen gifts between millions of Christians?

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And make them all different. Like I said, spiritual snowflakes. Let me tell you how. The fact that they're all different shows the latitude there is in their definition. Now Paul lists some in the Roman passage and he lists some in the Corinthian passage.

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It's as if he's just suggesting broad categories. One way to be understand it that's helpful for me is that it's like an artist's palette. And there's all these colors on the artist's palette. So as God takes his brush and he paints you he dips into different color categories.

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And he blends different colors. You're not the same as anyone else. In fact in Ephesians 2:10 it says that we are God's work of art. And our church is a good example of this and this is a fairly small church and we have many teachers in this church.

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Now if you were given us something to teach, a passage or whatever, none of them would teach it the same. We all are different, unique. Why? Because the category of gift is just that. It's a category that God is, if you were, dips into different colors to make you unique.

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And there's more than that. In Ephesians 4:7 it says the measure of Christ's gift. So he measures out in different amounts, different ways. So you might have the gift of teaching or you might have the gift of mercy or service or faith or whatever your gifts are.

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But the measure which you are given will vary. Not only that but Romans 12:3 Paul says when God gives the gift He also gives a measure of faith to operate that gift. So you have your gift measured out and then you have the right amount of faith to operate the gift.

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And your gift may be a combination of different things but you are absolutely unique. Even Timothy who did so many things, example, Timothy preached, he taught, he did the work of an evangelist, he counseled, he exhorted, he demonstrated leadership over and over again in his life.

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He had all those capabilities rolled into one thing. But when his gift was addressed, it was addressed as if he only had one gift, 1 Timothy 4.14. The gift that was given to you, Timothy, do not neglect that gift.

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So first of all, the extent of spiritual gift, everybody has them. You've got one that nobody else is exactly the same. That's why there is nobody to replace you if you don't function. Secondly, what about the source of spiritual gifts?

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Where do they come from? Look at verse 10. It says, as each one has received a special gift. You've received it. That means somebody gave it to you. You didn't earn it. You didn't work it up. You didn't beg for it.

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You just received it. So the source of your gift is given by the Holy Spirit. And third, the nature of your gift. The word gift here is charisma. That's the word we get. From grace, it's a gift of grace.

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So summing it up, it is graciously given free a supernatural capacity for ministry to the body of Christ. It's a spiritual gift that God gives you to minister to the body. That's it. I have a spiritual gift.

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I use it to minister to you. You have a spiritual gift. You use it to minister to me. We're not talking about human talent here. We're talking about divine enablement. Now, Peter says, first of all, take care of the vertical relationships.

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And then he says, secondly, love our horizontal relationships. And now Peter says, serve, serve, serve. And the thing that you serve with the vehicle God has given you is called a spiritual gift. So let me give you one more thought about it.

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Verse 10, verse 10 says, as each one has received a special gift, use it in serving one another, use it. Now, that's our obligation. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says you were given a gift for the common good.

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You are to use it for the body of Christ to benefit the body of Christ. You cannot cease to use your gift without causing harmful effect on the body. Just as your body has one part that doesn't work, it affects all of you.

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You have just a sore toe and you're limping around, you're crippling yourself. Right. We all have to do our part, whatever that gift is. So with the human body as an analogy, he says verse 14, the body is not one but many, not one member but many.

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So what's going to happen here in verse 15 is this we're in 1 Corinthians 12 still, if the foot should say I'm not a hand, I'm not part of the body, is it not for this reason any less part of the body?

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Say your feet can't go around saying well I'm not a hand, I'm not going to serve or what if your liver said I'm not going to, I'm going to shut down, I'm not going to work anymore because nobody sees me, right?

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It would be catastrophe, I'm not going to serve or if the whole body verse 17 he says we're an eye, where would the hearing be? We all have a different function. We cannot say I'm not going to serve because I'm not.

01:11:48

a hand or I'm not going to serve because I'm not the senior pastor, right? We can't do that. We have an obligation to use our spiritual gift and if we don't, we are in disobedience to the word of God because we were saved for that purpose.

01:12:05

We were saved to serve. Failure to exercise our spiritual gift defrauds the whole body of Christ. If I disregard my gift, then I'm crippling the body of Christ. If we don't function as the body, then Christ is crippled and the world's perspective of Christ is skewed.

01:12:33

Furthermore, would you notice in verse 10 again that he has a little strengthening for us here. He says we are to employ it as good stewards. So stewards, now we are responsible for managing the gift.

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Your gift is not for you. My gift is not for me. It's to serve each other. So finally, we've seen the incentive. We've seen the instructions and now we see the intention. What's the goal of all this?

01:13:12

Verse 11 at the end. So that in all things, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. What is the intention of all we do? What's the intention of our holiness, of our love and our service?

01:13:33

That God may be what? Glorified. God may be glorified. Peter says in all things, all matters of the Christian duty, God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. And this is what we call a doxology. A doxology is simply a word of praise, a word of glory.

01:13:58

So we are to glorify God and we can only glorify God, notice in verse 11, through Jesus Christ. And the way to do that is to live in the light of his second coming to fulfill our obligation of holiness love and service and power of the Holy Spirit and to live to the glory of God.

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And Peter can't resist in throwing an amen on the end of this, so let it be, he says, let my life be to the glory of God. So we are to live in the disciplines of life and as I said when we started all of this, it's a cost of discipleship is high but not as high as in rejecting Christ.

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So in the end, the goal is perfect holiness, perfect love, perfect serving, and we would take no credit for it. We would give Him all the glory. Amen? Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for Your Word that instructs us, that guides us, Lord, that's a lamp unto our feet, Lord, and a light unto our path.

01:15:19

I just pray this week, Lord, as we go from this place that You'd give us a desire to follow these basic foundational principles, Lord, that You've laid out here in Peter. Father, give us a thirst and a hunger to commune with You and to study Your Word, Lord, and draw close to You.

01:15:39

Lord, give us the strength and the courage to love one another as You love us, Father.
We thank You in Jesus' sweet name. Amen.