

How to Live with the End in View

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Preacher: Jeff Jackson

[0 : 0 0] family in light of what I want to bring to you in the way of the message to think about that it's sobering to me to think about many many people that I know who don't know Christ not only have they not known how to live but they have no idea how to die and what death means for us as Christians death is the entry into eternity it's far from the end it's our new beginning with Jesus and so we look forward not to the pain of death but to death itself because it ushers us into the presence of almighty God and it's our home going the title of my message for today from first Peter chapter four as we work verse by verse through this book together how to live with the end in view how to live with the end in view now beloved according to scripture how you will die is not the issue of concern even dying is not the issue according to Peter the issue is how did you live why why is that the case in scripture because as Christians as Christians we will each give an account to God for how we use this life to please and honor Jesus so as we live to please and honor

Christ we're building treasure in heaven what a great deal for us not only has Jesus suffered and died to take the penalty and pain of our sin on himself and given us his righteousness so that we can stand holy before almighty God but as we live in good works in this life we're building treasure in heaven as if Jesus weren't treasure enough right it's such a win-win for us Christians will give an accounting to God for the words we speak for the words we speak and the deeds we do now to put you in that frame of mind as we think about this together I want to take you to a couple of passages before we would read our passage for this morning will you turn with me to 2nd Corinthians 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 was interesting Greg went to Corinthians this morning because these two passages I'll bring to you start us off in Corinthians as well it's where I was brother so 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 beginning in verse 9 this is the apostle Paul speaking to his beloved brothers and sisters in Corinth about end-time reality and about the account that they will give to God for the life they lived in Jesus therefore verse 9 therefore we also have as our ambition whether at home or absent to be pleasing to him that is what guarded and guided Paul's entire life to be pleasing to Christ then verse 10 for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may be recompensed repaid for his deeds in the body according to what he has done whether good or bad now he's speaking here in terms of good or bad whether eternal or temporal did I do deeds that were pleasing to God which would be rendered good by God or were the deeds of my life more characterized by me living in selfishness or in pride let me give you just a little bit more on that 1st Corinthians chapter 3 also deals with this very topic but Paul gives just a tad bit more detail so it rounds it out a little more for us helps puts up put us in the frame of mind we need to be in I think as we move into what Peter tells us so 1st Corinthians 3 beginning in verse 10 according to the grace of God which was given to me like a wise master builder I laid a foundation and another is building on it but each man each person must be careful how he builds on it now what's the foundation that he's talking about verse 11 for no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid which is

Jesus Christ he is our foundation now if any man builds on the foundation of Christ with gold silver precious stones wood hay straw each man's work will become evident for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire that is God will refine it and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work if any man's work which he has built on it remains he will receive a reward that is an eternal reward if any man's work is burned up he will suffer loss but he himself will be saved yet so as through fire so as you look back up into verse 13 or 12 any man who builds on the foundation of Christ will build with gold silver precious stones wood hay straw that's a reality for each one of us the gold silver and precious stones bespeak eternal value the things that are valuable to God his word his people and acts of service toward his word and his people those are the good things that God holds valuable but then there are these things wood hay and straw those are considered worthless by the

Lord we will all have those in our life as we stand before God to give an account things that we did in pride things that we did in greed things that we did and spoke in selfishness arrogance carelessness prayerlessness we will all have that as Christians he goes on to say each man's work will become evident the fire will test the quality of that work that is it will test the eternal value or the lack thereof and then if any man's work which he has built on remains he'll receive that eternal reward from the Lord and there will be that in heaven for us and in verse 15 he will escape the ultimate judgment of God he is saved she is saved but they will suffer loss due to the wood and hay and straw and yet they'll be saved so this is not judgment for sin against Christians this is judgment for the good deeds or the lack of those good deeds that we do in our life as Christians nevertheless we are facing that time unbelievers face the judgment believers face that time when we'll have to give an account for how we lived our lives before the Lord as our Savior that's coming now the question is this what does the

Bible want us to do with that knowledge do you understand that unbelievers I know them and you know them unbelievers don't give any credence to this reality even if they think about the fact that they're going to die one day and that maybe there's a God in heaven most of them that I talk to think well I'm basically a good person and so they're okay but we understand that the deception that they're under due to sin and Satan in this world blinds the eyes of the unbelieving to seeing the glory of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ right they're blinded and it takes a miracle of God to lift those blinders and show them their need for Jesus that was certainly my case it is the case with that's what the Bible teaches that's what we're dealing with as these people face this reality of the end times what are we to do with that reality what difference should it make in the way that I live every day the priorities of my life where I give my time where I spend the Lord's money what I say and what I do how does that truth about your future motivate you to live now because now is what counts well that's Peter's concern in his ongoing encouragement to his readers to live their lives hear this carefully now according to the will of God for those of you who are visiting today we've been marching by that tune for a number of weeks and months now living our lives according to the will of God to please him in all respects let me read our text for today now and look at what we're going to be unpacking together from first Peter chapter 4 beginning in verse 7 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 whoever speaks is to do so as the 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 Jesus

[10 : 30] Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever amen don't you love it when the apostles write like this and they break out in this doxology of praise they just can't help themselves and I hope that's the case with us as well folks Peter grounds his instructions for godly living in this single concept at the beginning of verse 7 and we need to hold on to it the end of all things is near that rings in our ears well what does Peter mean by the end of all things well I think verses 4 through 6 will help shed some light on what he means look at 4 through 6 in all this this was from last Sunday's message in all this they are surprised the unbelieving the mockers that we read about earlier this morning that you do not run with them into the same excesses of sin or dissipation and so what do they do they mock you they malign you but they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead for the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead that though they are judged in the flesh as men they may live in the spirit according to the will of almighty God now this helps us because Peter is speaking of the day of judgment that's what he's talking about verse 6 if you look at verse 6 believers who have already died but who believe the preaching of the gospel live on in the spirit according to the will of God from verses 4 and 5 we can see the opposite is true for unbelievers who live for themselves and judge and malign those who live for Christ they will according to the text they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead so here's what's happening Peter is picking up on the theme of judgment by saying that the end of all things is near there's a sense of urgency here which is a biblical way of understanding the direction of human history and Christians need to hold tight to this this is teaching the direction for all human history it's all moving somewhere teleological telos goal oriented by God it's all moving in in the direction that God says it's supposed to move in it's a God-directed goal of Jesus second coming and earth's final judgment that's that's where it's all moving toward now for everyone who puts their faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins this end culminates in escaping being rescued from

God's final judgment by Jesus or on unbelievers for the sins that they had committed for those of us who have put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ his crucifixion and resurrection we will escape that judgment not so for unbelievers for people who've turned away in rebellion from the cross of Christ in the hope of his forgiveness they will receive the promise of judgment leading to hell and we don't want that for them it's important for us to take careful note about what this does not mean beloved right it what it doesn't mean the affairs of this earthly life are not moving us towards a some kind of humanly engineered dystopian apocalypse like you see in the movies no or it's opposite man's creation of a future utopian paradise as if we could ever pull that off no those themes are the stuff of sci-fi movies but they have nothing to do with reality man will not thwart God's goal for his creation now we stand on that as firmly as we stand on Jesus is coming again everything about human history is moving towards God's goal it's not out of control now look I am not saying that we're not going to bomb each other into oblivion I don't know how that's all going to look I just know God's in control so I know when I read the scripture you know when you read the scripture that there are things that are going to happen and going to be in place and as those things take place as we see those things shaping up those of us who are faithful who are reading scripture who are in prayer before the Lord perk up and we begin to recognize the signs of the times as it were as they are revealed to us we don't need to get all caught up in that well Jeff well what do we need to do then well what's Peter telling us to do he's telling us live faithfully you don't have to worry about all that just live faithfully to Christ that's enough isn't it you need any more in your bucket than that

I don't think that's enough for me just being faithful to the Lord on a consistent basis in other words the Bible teaches us that nothing man can or can't do will change the direction of human history that God has ordained for the end of the world as we know it all right so we have that fixed in our minds and in our hearts that all things are coming to an end but he says this Jeff he also says it's near well what does he mean by near because you know I'm astute enough to recognize that 2,000 years ago is when Peter said this to his original readers in 2,000 years of human history has moved forward that doesn't sound like near to me and I get that so we need to deal with it what's going on well near near has the idea of imminent imminent what does that mean drawing near approaching coming soon possibly at any moment it's not a trick this isn't something God put in the

Bible to kind of trick us or or psych us out you know yeah I told you it was going to be near man but I knew it was going to be 4,000 years so but but you didn't know that so you kept that's not what this is this is supposed to give us a wonderful sense of anticipation and expectation why because we know in God's economy that it's near and we know where we're going to be when it all comes down where are we going to be in the arms of Christ that's where we're going to be we're not going to be in all the judgment we're going to be safe in the arms of the Lord now that ought to do something to us that ought to have some kind of effect on the way that we're living now so for us now we can look at it this way we're 2,000 years closer to that at any moment return of Jesus Christ and the events that are going to usher in the final judgment of the Lord on all unbelievers let me take you to just a couple of passages scripture really quickly again then I'll get into the main points here real quickly but let me take you to a couple more places will you look toward the back of your Bible at first John it's right after second Peter there first John chapter 2 verse 18 John has been talking about not loving the things of the world not allowing themselves as

Christians to get caught up and intertwined in all of the issues and priorities that people live by who don't know the Lord and in verse 18 of chapter 2 he says this children it is the last hour now why would he say that if it weren't true because this is how we're supposed to live as Christians it is the last hour and just as you heard that antichrist is coming even now many antichrists have appeared from this we know that it is the last hour 2,000 years ago let's just give you one more Hebrews chapter 10 so back before first Peter before the book of James you have the book of Hebrews Hebrews chapter 10 and this is an interesting one for me beginning in verse 23 the context here is a new and living way of being faithful in our walk with God as the body of Christ and in verse 23 let us hold fast see that there's a again a sense of urgency there a plea to to move forward and and be sober minded about this let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering for he who promised is faithful and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds why why not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near live like this invest yourselves spiritually in one another as Christians stimulating one another to the love and good deeds that help you lay up treasure in heaven as faithful people because the day is drawing near tick tick tick tick you're running out of time now for some people that freaks them out can I use that vernacular we talk about that they lose their mind but for Christians it should do this it should take us from this kind of a view of life and this world and do this just like that and make it very I know exactly what God expects of me

[21 : 52] I know exactly how I'm supposed to do you say well you haven't told us that all right well let me get to that I'll tell you about what God says now it's meant to incentivize us that means to motivate us in a life of God-pleasing spiritual priorities and actions so our biblical awareness I want to be really clear about this our biblical awareness that the end is near does not lead us to a life of gloom and doom no it doesn't lead us to a life of fear and anxiety no and it does not incite us into a panic of frantic activity running around no but it doesn't depress us into some doleful inactivity either so we're not sitting on the in a meadow on the side of the hill waiting for Jesus no we're not doing that either we're not carrying around signs that say that the end of the world no we're not what is what does Peter want us to do all right let's answer that

Peter wants his Christian readers to adopt a heavenly anticipation do you have that that is a biblically informed expectation about living in the last days we're in those days you and I need a biblically balanced view of what's coming and why why is it coming so Peter's instructions in verses 7 through 11 are built around four four spiritually purposeful priorities and these priorities help you focus your spiritual efforts to live for Christ with the end drawing near so I hope we understand what I'm saying it's one thing to tell us the end is drawing near live for Christ all right the end is drawing near it's supposed to incentivize me motivate me give me a sense of anticipation and expectation supposed to get me ready to go now what well what do I focus on what should be those priorities of my life given this reality that's going on what is God calling me to well the New Testament's full of all these kinds of things but isn't it interesting where Peter goes next here's what he tells his readers who are under all this persecution at this particular time the end of all things is near therefore and here it comes number one be purposed in prayer beloved do you notice that the very first thing that he says in light of all of this is pray don't run over to the grocery store and buy all the toilet paper don't run over here and organize a group of people and storm this and rush that and protest this what does he say Christian pray now I'm going to tell you why why would he say that this is a time for action prayers not action have you ever made the mistake of saying well I can't really do anything for you but I can pray for you oh don't do that the best and highest thing that you can do is pray now that doesn't mean we don't move into action and do something tangible we'll get to that in a minute but Peter starts with prayer and we really need to grab a hold of this prayer what is prayer but depending on God and asking him to act so that his designs and his purposes are fulfilled this is biblical praying praying that God's will is done now how does Peter want us to approach this task of communion with the Lord in prayer well the text tells us doesn't it the end of all things is near therefore pray like this be of sound judgment and sober spirit in your praying this contrasts with being frantic or frozen about the last days those are the two polar opposites

I'll give you a couple more in a minute I'm either going to be all crazy over here panic stricken and frantic or I'm going to be just frozen with fear and non-activity and nothing I just I have nothing no look I don't want to wear this out but it's just so fresh and so poignant COVID COVID COVID provides us with such a fresh example of how human beings react to threats and uncertainties when they're not looking to Christ people panic or pretend can I just offer that you might have a couple different ways of looking at it but can I offer that as the two polar opposites of what we saw going on as this thing developed years ago we either saw wholesale panic again look there would have been no toilet paper shortage if people would have just stayed normal we were handling everything's fine but what we had people run out and just lose their minds or we had the very opposite we had everybody saying oh chill out there's nothing to this even from the beginning

I met some of those people well there was an issue it wasn't the issue that we were told at the beginning we all know the stories one attitude was the world is ending the other attitude was I've got this both are prideful both display and manifest human pride both did a lot of damage didn't they it's because we're people of extremes and Peter is calling us not to be those people and prayer will help prayer will be the difference as we walk in faith with Christ as Christians we know who oversees every detail of what happens in his world we should never stoop to reacting there's a different way Christians are first responders that's what we are by nature and calling in Christ we are first responders we need to carry the day in faith so we're the first to step forward and we're first to assume a posture of faith in God what is that posture on our knees in prayer showing and demonstrating and pleading our dependence on almighty God that is the place we need to be to begin with now the challenge comes here how many of us when we face a certain situation in our lives how many of us are more prone to act to move out to fix that's our that's our first knee jerk that's how we just move and go right and how many of us in certain situations and circumstances of life especially as those things ramp up and there's more at stake how many of us our first response to those circumstances is to go to the Lord in prayer say Jeff what does that look like well when we are cultivating an attitude of prayer without ceasing we're in the habit of talking to God all the time all day long because we know we're needy people

Lord I need grace every minute not just when the tough times hit because I don't have this who am I so when I'm cultivating look you're sitting at your cubicle or whatever and you've got something coming up you're going to go see somebody you're going to go talk to a fellow employee you've got you should Lord just help me be wise you're saying that maybe under your breath Lord help me be wise help me to be discerning help me to be gracious and kind and Lord when I come over here to this and this situation is happening and I know this person has already got some kind of negative feelings toward me please help me to be patient please help me to believe the best it doesn't matter what it is you've got homework to you've got a test coming up you're driving on the road it doesn't matter when we're cultivating a heart and an attitude that we're always talking to the Lord and depending on the Lord and being keeping ourselves reminded I need Christ I need

[31 : 13] Christ all the time then when it comes to the crises that happen what are we already in the habit of and so doesn't it make perfect sense that we're going to drop to our knees and offer that to the Lord and then there's times out of that prayer we can we can arise with a certain confidence of focus and a spiritual alertness that prayer helps cultivate and nurture in our souls and in our minds and then we move forward in that alertness in that humility in that dependence on God because I'm moving forward and I say you know what God's got this and he's got me he's got me I don't have to worry he'll give me what to say and what to think it's calming it's calming we don't have to be creatures and people of extremes we we do this in the chaos don't we we do this in the chaos and so in the chaos what do we need as we pray like this we need to be of sound judgment and have a sober mind isn't that what our text says the end of all things is near therefore be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer look if you would up sound judgment is so for a nice safe so for a nice safe I'm telling you that for a reason and sober minded is neppure do you hear how they sound the same that's because they're synonyms they mean basically the same thing just like they sound almost alike sound judgment is to be sensible and sober minded is to be self-restrained or self-controlled folks could we have used some of that when

COVID hit in the subsequent months oh my goodness what a difference this could have made well we need to be leading the way in that kind of thing when people see us they need to see and they need to ask why aren't you freaking out you say brother there's a whole bunch of things that are worse than running out of toilet paper let me let you know a whole bunch of things I'm not freaking out because God's got this am I concerned yes am I troubled by what I see this doing to my neighbors absolutely but fortunately the Bible gives us the answer to all of this it's to look to Jesus we were told by the Bible that the end is drawing near and so more and more of this kind of stuff is going to happen and it's going to reveal where we're putting our faith a lot of people around the world who put their faith in themselves and in their health got a wake up call didn't they we're all moving toward wearing out living in the last days requires us to be sensible and self-controlled in our prayerful responses to God oh how we need that so we respond we don't react we respond with prayer with a spiritual alertness that's tuned to seeing

God's will done in his world we are his servants so we keep our heads please hear this we keep our heads because we've grounded our hearts in Jesus Christ so we're not taking credit it's not we're looking down our nose at the unbelievers or the people who are panicking and saying oh well I'm glad I'm not like them it's not that at all prayer keeps us humble and helps us remain servants to these people that's so much of what if you haven't been here go back and listen to some of the sermon how Peter tells us in these dire circumstances in this level of persecution remain humble and kind and giving and be willing to take it even as Jesus took it for us and left us an example well that's where Peter wants us to start how about this one be faithful and forgiving verse eight above all keep fervent in your love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins let me explain just for a minute each of these four spiritual priorities relate to our life together together yeah as a church family people Peter's speaking to

Christians he's talking to the churches local groups of believers gathered around what is modern day Turkey all of the different places that he mentioned back in chapter one verse one aliens scattered throughout Pontus Galatia Cappadocia Asia Bithynia that's mainly modern Turkey we are to do each of these things towards and with each other so we're to encourage each other in being prayerful first responders you need to be thinking in terms of how to encourage me in that I need to do the same toward you how can you help encourage me to be more prayerful what do you hear Greg and I constantly say to you when we have opportunity like this to make an appeal to you about how to minister to us as your pastors what's the first thing we always tell you please pray for us that is the highest thing you can do in ministering to your pastors be on your knees for us throughout the week pray for us please pray for us we are needy men we are men dependent on Jesus and we need your prayers to serve you faithfully we're to be faithful in forgiving each other as we stumble and trip along together in our efforts to navigate these last days events and the daily issues that constitute the everyday matters of life life brings problems problems bring challenges challenges are stressful and stressful situations are seed beds for sinful attitudes and responses but they don't have to be as Christians we don't have to see the challenges of life as seed beds for sin we don't have to do that we have Christ we can see those as opportunities to bring glory to Jesus we just have to get out of the way we have to think more in terms of who's in charge and who am I serving so Peter says this above all you see that in your text above all keep fervent in your love for one another our love for

Jesus our love for Jesus should define our prayers and our particulars as we follow Christ together that's not all notice I hope at least your Bible has some form of this he says fervent above all keep fervent so we have this overriding overarching reality that we're supposed to live by and it's supposed to govern all these priorities above all be fervent or keep fervent in your love for each other the word picture behind the Greek word for fervent that translates forward fervent is the picture of us straining every muscle in your body every sinew in your body straining in an all-out effort everything's taught and moving it was actually a picture of a horse in full stride and you could see the muscles rip rippling and the horse straining and the froth that's this word fervently so get frothy about your love for each other it's okay to do that that's what we're being called to this is an echo of what Peter has said to us earlier if you go back to chapter one let's look at the internal context here a little bit chapter one verse 22 since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren fervently love one another from the heart there you go now he's echoing that again fervently love one another from the heart this is loving each other with a deep-seated sincerity an unbreakable commitment to strain ourselves to apply this love in being forgiving with each other why do I say that will you take note of verse 8 in terms of the why let's read it again above all keep fervent in your love for one another why because love covers a multitude of sins to cover a multitude of sins means means practicing biblical forgiveness that's it straightforward the strain of life and our sinful responses are overcome by our love straining straining to forgive each other did you hear the stories about churches all over the world not just our nation where Christians were being torn apart and fussing as COVID stuff ramped up and they were at odds with each other what's going to help us with that kind of thing what's going to help us with all of our opinions and biases and prejudices and and fighting the temptations that you and I have to be fearful or egotistical about stuff well what does Peter tell us above all overshadow over arching arching and through all of this fervently love one another because love is going to help you practice forgiveness toward each other long suffering you're going to believe the best and work toward it can you see can you see the treasure of unity in that there is no unity among people like us without that love love for Christ and then love for each other what does it do it helps you

[43 : 00] and I sit down and be quiet when we need to be instead of moving forward to put my opinion it helps us step back it's very real to cover a multitude of sins only folks only the power of God's love can keep us sane sensible and self-controlled in the chaos and confusion of people living for themselves so as the end draws near and the world gets crazier God's love keeps Jesus as the focus and worship of our hearts and if there's one area we don't want to trip up in it's that one right now let me give you hasten on and give you the third one because this one's I'm going to do rather quickly it's so straightforward it's one verse be hospitable to one another without complaint now why does he move from talking about how we're ministering to each other in loving forgiveness and kindness and believing the best and really really working at that and straining at that with each other to now be hospitable to each other what in the world is that all about well this simply extends God's love that he's just been talking about beyond the church family to those around us we're not supposed to get our four and close the door this is a gathering where we're worshiping and honoring the Lord and encouraging and stimulating one another to love and good deeds that we will take out into the community right and minister that reality in the community because they need it because they're desperate for it and they don't even know it I didn't know it until it was told to me and God opened my eyes this is this is what we saw as an immediate response to the COVID crisis in the first few months or so here's what we saw what did we see hoarding hoarding right that wasn't just in the US hospitality is the answer to hoarding why because hospitality simply means this it's a love for strangers the love that we have for each other gets extended out for strangers people I don't even know it's to be friendly and generous to strangers so the idea is that you will not be unwilling unhelpful or uninvolved in sharing your resources with those you don't know you know I'm wearing this illustration out and I'm saying it it's silly but just think about it I didn't think about this at the time because I was just like you I couldn't get me but what if we'd have been able to get a bunch of toilet paper in and we had it and we just went around the neighborhoods with toy who would have thought that would be an evangelistic event and say here you go we love you in the

Lord Jesus have some you just don't and more is coming we don't know and then look at this it we can't we can't reach out to strangers in this way and cop this attitude of why do I got to give my stuff to people I don't even know what does he say be hospitable to one another you've got to know why Peter added this without complaint without complaint a grudging grumbling complaining attitude is sinful as we share what we have with strangers in need as persecution and the greed of this world ramp up our acts of love on behalf of Jesus should far exceed that greed as we meet needs with meekness this is not just the ideal this is the reality let me give you the final one be stewards in serving be stewards in serving as each one has received a special gift employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God that's what we're stewarding we are stewarding God's grace his undeserved love kindness and power verse 11 whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of

God that's no small thing whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies again not a small thing so that in all these things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever we are stewards in serving so Peter turns his attention in this final little priority in our sacrificial service back to each other within the local church so he moved from hospitality to strangers now back again into how we're living together as the family of God each Christian has at least one God given spiritual ability that's what a spiritual gift is it's a God given spiritual ability and you're to use that in building up the local body the church where you have come and planted your life and said I want to join these people and I want to serve Christ Jesus here with these people I want to move forward with them so God's given you at least one

God given spiritual ability to use to invest in that body maybe you're the little finger or maybe you're the foot or the elbow look they're all important as I get older and these things start wearing out you would not believe how much you think about that right yeah when that baby's hurting right there and going to sleep on me you know I'm like come on yeah you're important you are you're important in the Lord Jesus don't don't think that because we're Christians and we're humble and we're meek that we're not important to God we are how important well Jesus bought us with his blood that's pretty important it doesn't make us full of ourselves it humbles us it humbles us to think that God God the creator of the universe would give his only son for me yes so what does Peter tell us to do with this God given spiritual ability he tells us employ it in serving I don't know how yours reads employ it in serving this is the verb form for the noun diachonos diachonos now I'm mentioning that to you we've got a deacon ordination coming up God willing next week so look at it here's our word it means deacon this is a servant or deacon and Peter is emphasizing that you should serve minister to the body of Jesus with what you've received from Jesus what I've received I give back in service to my brothers and sisters all to the glory of the Lord friends I could go anywhere I want to go with this and give you illustrations and talk about what's important but let me give you a real quick one because this is where so many people in our congregation are right now as we've had many families recently joining and we have several families I think three or four lined up to join right away one of them today listen this is a critical reason for church membership this is why we put a premium on church membership we're not one of those churches that say just come and be loosey-goosey no we ask you to become a member of our church because we want to offer ongoing guidance as you carefully and prayerfully apply your God-given gift in service to Christ as you serve these people

Greg somebody needs to oversee that and administrate that and help manage that and coordinate that what happens if we don't do that Here's what happens. He and I have seen this time and time again We have people that will pack up around a certain gift And other people will be interested in that gift or interested in that thing And pretty soon you have a little fiefdom That develops and that's built around typically a core person who kind of heads it up got it all started And so you've got one over here and one over here and one over there and one over there And then what they start doing is they start thinking that their thing is the thing And then it becomes a competition new people come in and you start salivating Oh, we got to go get them. Let's get them into our thing So if your thing's the choir you first thing you want to know is hi good to meet you. Hey, do you sing?

[52 : 24] Or whatever And then that starts happening right And then we've got this this this lack of unity We don't have a church family who's who's seeing the big picture of the lord of the church And their giftedness as being a part of that effort to move through serving the lord of the church Somebody has to come and help coordinate and keep these people Together in that way of thinking and not allow those people look if you don't believe that read corinthians I am of apollos. I'm of paul And paul had to move in and say who's paul who's apollos?

It's the lord jesus christ that counts and we're all on his team Well, that's what we provide look if I had to sum up church membership in one word here's the word I'd choose accountability We emphasize church membership for the reason of accountability And greg and I as the pastors of grace church we do everything we can in our service to you to keep us unified And moving forward in a together goal of serving christ There there aren't any heroes There there aren't any superstars in our church Each of us what i'm doing right now is more visible and everything but this is what I do. This is my contribution And that's just the way we look at it So you offer your gifts in service to the church family Notice the text as good stewards of the manifold grace of god

That's what that's what joining a church and serving in a church is all about You are trying to be a good and faithful steward of the grace of god on your life to bless others A good steward or a steward is a household manager Of what belongs to god And and beloved your spiritual gift is just that It is god's gift to you for the church Not for you God did not give me the gift of gab Right I was in sales for a while I hope that surprises you And I remember when I went into sales because I had to have a job Uh the the economic downturn hit and I was out of a church It destroyed our church. It just decimated our economy and our people And I had to have a job and so I took a job in sales and a long story short. I remember

After the interview On the way home I was talking to suzanne and I said suzanne do you think I could do this? Because I never tried to sell anything in my life And she said yes, you're just going to have to make it you And so she helped me make that job So that when I went in and did what I did I did it the way jeff knew how to do it And god blessed me and many many months later I had some people who were in that industry come to me and say what's your secret and I said it's no secret I'll tell you the two things that I do I pray and I tell the truth That's it and they went yeah, right come on and I said no really I pray my heart out As i'm going to each job site And when I get there i'm determined to tell the homeowners the truth And if that means I don't get the sale, I don't get it That's it now we had guys in our industry that were taking golf balls and putting them in socks and going up on the roof and creating hail damage

And they got caught eventually We had other people that were doing other things to trick people into thinking that they're I I sold roofs for a living Try that one. I didn't even know that existed as a job But god blessed I don't have the gift of gab what I do here Is a god giftedness that is used to serve the church and god gets the glory for it and hope Hopefully you are built up and encouraged in it So the opposite of a good steward is one who is unfaithful An unfaithful steward is someone who neglects or refuses to use his or her Spiritual gift to help build up god's family. That's why we don't want anybody on the periphery. Do we greg?

[57 : 05] We don't want anybody coming in and staying on the fence and out in the peripheral Because you're sinning against the lord when you do that folks if you're not getting involved in helping move the church forward and using your gift Don't don't do that Don't ignore or refuse to be used by the lord a good steward towards god and his gift is to serve your brothers and sisters And then he says this the many forms of god's grace Will then become evident clearly seen in the congregation and you'll begin to benefit from those many forms Of the manifold grace of god showing up as you minister as a little finger Or the tongue Or the eyes or whatever it is in the body We're blessed we're diversified and yet we're unified And then finally whoever speaks is to do so as one speaking the utterances of god serving serving by the strength Which god supplies peter gives us an example of this in action

And he uses two broad categories Here's the first one the first one involves speaking gifts Now you read this and you may say yeah I don't know I don't think I fit up there But some of you might read that and think you know, maybe Maybe that would be one of the areas of giftedness for me Peter says that those who use the speaking gifts are to be very careful to speak what god has said That means where god has spoken to us in his word These these are not new words from god god gave me a word god said this to me This is god has already said let me share it with you Let me help you understand and discern what's been written here that keeps us all on the same page I don't have any other special word from god the scriptures are our word The other category includes gifts of service Administration those are just some prayer mercy helps now notice how we're to use the gifts of service by the strength

Which god supplies this this applies to everybody Peter even tells us in the church. We're to speak the truth in love. That's everybody Just tell the truth Be truthful in love In both cases, we're utterly dependent on god for the gift itself And for the use of the gift So that's god's grace His undeserved favor for living in his power and doing his will speaking and serving in the church By god's grace is the only way we can see the purpose Of all this accomplished and what is that purpose?

Will you look with me at the end of verse 11 so that in all these things? God may be glorified through jesus christ to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen God help us that we would never make it about us Always about him. Will you pray with me?

Father you have loaded us up as usual as we turn to the richness of your word Dear lord in heaven. There's no way we could mine all of the wonder And all of the good and the wisdom and the depth of what we see even in this passage but lord to the degree that we have Expounded on this text with wisdom and clarity to your honor, please Use it to bless us And to fulfill your promise that your word will never never come And go away that it won't accomplish its purpose Accomplish your purpose in our hearts in each heart today Help us to take this And make use of it in our service to you and to each other Help us to be people of prayer Help us father to bow our hearts to these spiritual priorities as the day draws near for your return And help us to build treasure in heaven as we do so We give you the glory and we thank you for your goodness to us in christ's name

[61:16] Amen