

The Glory of God part 2

By David Harrell

Preached on: Sunday, September 11, 2016

Music is a wonderful thing, is it not? What a gift God has given us to allow the doxologies of our soul to be expressed in such a profound way.

We come to the fourth and final discourse that I wanted to give to you to help you understand a little bit more of kind of the foundations of Calvary Bible Church. We've talked about the holiness of God and now we come to the end of our topic concerning The Glory of God, and this will help prepare us as well for our study that I will begin next week on the epistle to the Hebrews, so you can be reading that and we will begin that next week.

But this morning, I would like for you to turn to 1 Peter 4. There are so many texts that we could use to describe the glory of God and how we should live for the glory of God, it's hard to know which one to choose, but I believe the Spirit of God would have us go here. By way of reminder, last week we examined the revelation of the internal glory of God that is manifested in his works and in his word. We marveled at the glory of the Lord in the pillar of cloud and fire that led and protected the Israelites in the Sinai wilderness that eventually came to rest upon the tabernacle and later the temple, and then later in the Incarnate Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Last week, we marveled at how that same glory now abides in all who are united to Christ through saving faith and therefore we enjoy the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. And we celebrated the great promises that are ours, that one day our holiness, righteousness, even our bodies will redound to the glory of God forever and forever. Absolutely staggering. As Paul says, "We all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." Indeed, this is the great work of the Spirit in the hearts and the souls of the redeemed and it is a fruit that grows only on the vine of suffering. God calls us to share in his sufferings in order that we might also share in his glory, a concept, frankly, very few believers understand in our Western culture. I mean, how many of us really experience suffering because of our faith in Christ? We don't experience much of that, even though I believe the days are coming. Paul reminds us in Romans 8:17 that as his children we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."

And as we continue with this study today, it is my great passion and prayer for each of you to literally see and savor the glory of God in the person and in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and his word. I yearn for each of you to taste and to treasure the glory of God by having a God-centered vision of reality, one that can only be seen through the lens of God's self-revelation in his word. I

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long to instill within each of you a passion for the truth because without it you will never develop a fervor for God's glory and an abiding joy in it.

Dear friends, we cannot be happy apart from an accurate apprehension of the glory of God. The great failure of the church today, I believe, is its unwillingness to focus on the glory of God. Instead, we tend to be obsessed with the glory of man. Dear friends, the Gospel is not about God making much of us, it is about us making much of him. A very important truth. Jesus said that God is magnified when his people prefer him over all the riches and pleasures of life, Luke 8:14. And it's always my goal in preaching to give you an expository exultation, if you will, of the glory of God; to lovingly expose our suicidal pleasures that we get from sin, those things that bring misery into our life, to expose those things, to loosen our grip upon this world so that we will truly deny ourselves and follow Christ and enjoy all that he has for us. Nowhere else can we find lasting joy. Moreover, unless you see the beauty of Christ and stand in speechless awe of his saving work, you will never have a heartfelt sense of urgency to proclaim the Gospel to other people, to help others find real life in Christ. Frankly, those with little awe render little worship, and those with little adoration offer little service for the King and for his kingdom. I hope you have come today to worship the Lord corporately, starving for the glory and the greatness of our God, believing that unless you have it, unless he feeds you, you will perish, so to speak. I pray that your heart echoes the heart of the Psalmist who said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirst for God, for the living God."

So today I wish to offer some practical instruction in some of the virtues that promote true adoration in the presence of our glorious God, virtues I would challenge you to both consider as well as cultivate in your life, that you may enjoy more fully all that he has for us. And this was the Apostle Peter's great passion, especially in 1 Peter 4:7-11. Let me read the text to you. He said,

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. 8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint. 10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 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; [here's why] so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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Now, what it means to live for the glory of God is obviously a vast topic, one way beyond what we will have the time to discuss here this morning, but hopefully we can get a little better understanding of what that looks like as we examine these five verses, because I believe here we discover that we can give glory to God by cultivating and manifesting four essential virtues. We should, 1. anticipate Christ's return. 2. Pursue holy living. 3. Love one another. And finally, employ our spiritual gifts. And I hope this will be helpful to you this morning.

Now, let me give you a bit of the context here. Let's go back in time to about 65 AD. Rome has been almost burnt to the ground. The people are convinced that their emperor Nero set the city on fire in order to satisfy his lust to build. He wanted to build bigger and greater. All of their homes that contained their idols that they worshiped, their temples, their shrines, all of this is gone. So there is a great religious dilemma that they are experiencing. They are frustrated. They are homeless. They are confused. And of course, Nero knew that he needed a scapegoat so guess who he blamed? The Christians. So persecution began to spread and the saints by the time this letter is written, are in desperate need of encouragement, of strengthening, and so he writes to them. In fact, at the beginning of 1 Peter in chapter 1, beginning in verse 1, Peter says that he is writing to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These are basically churches in various provinces scattered throughout what is modern-day Turkey. He goes on to say, "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Now, this does not mean that he knew about this before it happened, it means that he planned it before it happened. He decreed it to happen ahead of time because of his predetermined love relationship towards them. So he's writing to them according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

If you go on to read the first part of 1 Peter, he goes on to remind them that they've been born again to a living hope. He calls them to holy living. He calls them to be submissive even to authority, to suffer for righteousness' sake, and then we come to verse 7 here in chapter 4. He encourages them and he exhorts them to this end, and isn't it interesting how he begins? He says in verse 7, "The end," literally, the consummation, the fulfillment, "The end of all things is near." The term "near" means "it's approaching; it's coming." He is referring to Christ's return to judge the world and establish his messianic kingdom. It is imminent. It's approaching. It's coming. It could happen at any time. You see, dear friends, only the Lord's longsuffering nature holds back his judgment today and although in the calendar of eternity, a thousand years is as a day, the end of the whole present dispensation is approaching, it's near. That's where he begins.

"The end of all things is near; therefore," where he's going to go here, those who seek to live for the glory of God, 1. anticipate Christ's return. They are going to be like those that

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Habakkuk described in Habakkuk 2:14, those that long for the earth to "be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." People who live for the glory of God are going to yearn for his coming in their heart. They are going to understand what we looked at briefly last week, the very beginning of Jesus' model for prayer that begins with this most fundamental passion, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Not hallowed is your name. This is not an acclamation, it is a petition. "Father, make your name hallowed. Make your name sacred and glorious in all of the earth. Let it begin with me because I long to see your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." You see, dear friends, this will happen one day when the Lord Jesus returns and the end of all things begins at that time in terms of its final consummation.

Throughout the New Testament believers are reminded of the importance of being alert for the Lord's second coming, living in anticipation of the Lord's imminent return. In Mark 13, beginning in verse 32, Jesus says, "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time will come." And likewise in Luke 12:40, he says, "be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect." Dear friends, Jesus is coming again. The end is approaching. If that were true almost 2,000 years ago, how much more is it true today? "Therefore," as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, beginning in verse 9, "we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." Why? "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Of course, the next event on the prophetic timetable leading up to Christ's second coming as King of kings is the rapture of the church when believers, according to 1 Corinthians 15:51, "will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." Dear friends, do you long for that event? Do you live in light of this unimaginable transformation into glory? The rapture of the church will then signal the pre-kingdom judgments that the Lord will begin to pour out upon the world, including his covenant people Israel. After the church has been snatched away, God's focus will once again turn, return I should say, to Israel, leading to the salvation of a remnant of his covenant people and the establishment of his messianic kingdom and, of course, that kingdom will be the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal new heavens and new earth where the righteous will reign forever in the presence of his glory.

Beloved, do these things thrill your soul? I hope they do. There are so many things in this world that compete for our attention but this is reality. This is the glory to come. Do you long to see God's glory made manifest in a world that hates him? If so, your yearning

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gives glory to God as you anticipate his return. That was Peter's message to these people enduring such severe persecution.

Well, this will also motivate you to the second virtue that gives God glory, number 2: holy living. Notice what he goes on to say, "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment." The term literally means "to be in one's right mind." It carries the idea of having a proper perspective of yourself; being in control of your passions; to be clear-minded; to be sensible; to be discerning. In the context here, it carries the idea of staying focused on the priorities of godly living, those things that are honoring to Christ, those things that will bring glory to him, knowing that he could return at any time.

Not only are we to be of sound judgment but he says, "and sober spirit." In other words, we are to be serious; we are to be thoughtful; we are to be contemplative of God's will and his word; we are to maintain a sense of spiritual alertness, guarding our hearts against Satan's deceptions against all of the distractions and the fleeting pleasures of the world, the lust of our flesh and so forth. We are to do this for the purpose of prayer.

So I must ask you: does this describe you? Can you be characterized as a person of sound judgment and sober spirit? Let me give you just one little litmus test. How much time did you spend in the word last week? Now, I don't mean kind of out of duty but I mean out of desire, out of a longing of your heart? Because, dear friends, we must have a proper assessment of ourselves and that only comes when we exercise the virtue of humility and we have a knowledge of the truth concerning ourselves, concerning God, concerning the Gospel. You will recall that the blessed man in Psalm 1 is described this way: his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates day and night. In other words, the man that is happy in the Lord, the man that is blessed by the Lord, is going to ponder the word of God in his heart. Does that describe you? I hope it does.

By the way, they didn't have the biblical text like we do today so they had to memorize the word of God. They had to therefore meditate upon it. They would contemplate the expositions of the word that they heard. In fact, the Psalmist says in Psalm 119, beginning in verse 11, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." Verses 15 and 16, he goes on to say, "I will meditate on Your precepts And regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word." Folks, does this describe you? If not, then verse 7 here of 1 Peter 4 would read this way concerning you, "The end of all things is near; but I don't really care about it that much, assuming that that's true, therefore I have neither sound judgment nor a sober spirit necessary for God honoring prayer."

My, what an indictment. And folks, you know, this is even more of a challenge considering the day in which we live with all of the technology that we have today in our

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culture that, frankly, even though there are some wonderful things about them, no doubt, but unfortunately they also promote distractions and shallow thinking. Most people today, for example, rely on a very biased news media. We hear little news snippets here and there, soundbites here and there, and they begin to shape our thinking. There is a narrative that some people will put out there and we never really think deeply about it, we just kind of absorb it. And we get on the internet and we surf this and we glance at that, and then something else catches our eye and we click on that. We never stop to really read, to meditate, to ponder, to analyze what's happening in the world. And folks, this bleeds into our Christian life. How often do we really read and meditate and ponder and analyze the word of God, yet these are virtues that we must cultivate in order to produce God honoring worship and prayer.

I mean, let's be honest: aren't we tempted to spend much more time in front of a screen than in front of Scripture? Of course we are. By the way, I've noticed that screens are becoming more addictive than heroin to our children. The word of man is far more appealing to our sinful flesh than the word of God. Take, for example, the very first phrase of verse 7, "The end of all things is near." Some of you have walked with Christ for many years but have you ever really thought deeply about that phrase? Do you really understand what God is saying? And I can tell you sadly, having dealt with thousands of people, many believers I talk to seldom think about the imminent return of Christ. It's just not that big of a deal.

Furthermore, very few have sound judgment, a proper perspective of themselves, nor do they have a sober spirit, the idea of being thoughtful about God's word and his will, being spiritually alert. Too often we are tempted to think much more about ourselves. Many Christians have unwittingly adopted the world's obsession with image. Looks is everything. How we appear to other people is everything. Let's face it, we spend far more time grooming our hair to impress others than in grooming our hearts to impress God. Not so much impress him but to please him.

Most people in our culture are blinded by the desire for praise and for approval. Why don't you think people literally live on their cellphones? I don't think anybody would argue that that's not the case in our culture. Well, the answer is: to project an image and make sure other people like it. That's what that's about. Many Christians refuse to admit that they are desperate for attention and for affirmation. It's so easy to become self-centered rather than God-centered, to demand that the world orbit around me. The Bible calls that vainglory or vanity. It's so easy for us to crave admiration and to think that we deserve it, even demand it, and so we become obsessed with beauty and charm and power, fashion, hairstyles, make-up, body image, on and on it goes, because we end up falling in love with ourselves. I mean, let's be honest, self-promotion is really what fuels

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Facebook and selfies for most people. "Notice me! Look at me! See how clever, how cute I am!"

I remember when we were in Florida not too long ago, which is not one of my favorite places to be on the beach. But I remember going into a restaurant and I saw two young ladies, probably in maybe their late teens, early 20s, and they had their cameras and they were doing all these facial things taking pictures of themselves, and I started watching and over the next several days, I saw this repeatedly. I'm not saying there's anything inherently sinful with that but my point is simply this: we want to project an image and obviously they're going to pick the most flattering photos. They can't wait for the praise to come flowing in. I mean, you know how it works. That's what that's all about. Imagine if I had gone over to them and said, "Excuse me, young ladies, but I'm curious, do you realize that the end of all things is near? Do you realize that Jesus is coming again to judge the world?" I mean, we laugh because people don't think that way. The Spirit of God is saying, "You need to think that way."

"The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." Have a proper view of yourself. Acknowledge that you are a sinner saved by grace and you're in desperate need of spiritual resources to somehow live for the glory of God and to guard your heart against the seductions of the world and all of the distractions that can ruin your testimony, that can bring misery into your life. Realize that you need to celebrate the coming of the King. You need to go and make disciples and all of those glorious things along with enjoying the wonderful things that God has given us to enjoy this side of heaven. Of course, the unsaved never consider any of this. Their reason is, as Paul says in Romans 3:18, is that there is no fear of God before their eyes. But this should never characterize a man or a woman who has been saved by grace.

I was fascinated by the observation of two secular psychologists, Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell, who have studied narcissism in our contemporary culture. In their book, "The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement," boy, that pretty well says it all, right? They make a compelling argument that the emergency of Facebook and YouTube have, among other things, contributed to the narcissism epidemic of our day. By the way, narcissism is defined as an excessively high and unrealistic opinion about one's self and an obsession with one's public image. They observed that, quote, "Social networking sites shape the way teens and 20-somethings view their worlds and mold the malleable personality of young people like clay." They went on to say that there are four key messages that social networking, the social networking culture instills in people, especially young people. 1. The need for constant entertainment. 2. Flaunt it if you've got it. 3. Success through being a consumer. And finally, 4. Attaining happiness through glamorous adulthood, the latter primarily understood in a sexual context.

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They went on to say, "All of these messages are consistent with a growing culture of narcissism with its rampant materialism, aggression toward others, vanity, shallow sexuality and a rabid desire for attention and fame. The structure of internet sites rewards the skills of the narcissist," they say, "such as self-promotion, selecting flattering photographs of one's self, and having the most friends."

Friends, this is a challenge for all of us because if we're honest, we have to realize that we have a proclivity to give glory to ourselves rather than to give glory to God in how we live our lives. We are prone to live and adore everything but God, including ourselves. And even the technologies that we have can war against a heart that would say with the Psalmist, "Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory." Imagine if thousands of Christians got on their Facebook sites, those who are guilty of this, and confessed their vanity and replaced their self-promoting verbosity and pictures and replace them with just an apprehension of God's glory? Imagine if they posted pictures and stories and hymn lyrics and Bible verses that reflected a reverential awe and exaltation of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Imagine if on their post it says, "Today I want to make much of Christ"? Imagine if they put on their post 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"?

Beloved, this is the stuff of holy living. This is the kind of reverence that flows from a heart that is consumed with the majesty and holiness of God. And I would lovingly challenge you, you know, if the shoes fit, wear it? I would challenge you to replace that latest post that was motivated by your own self-glorification, replace it with maybe Hebrews 12:28-29, "let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." Or how about Psalm 95, beginning in verse 3, "For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods, In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker." You see, dear friends, a proper understanding of the Gospel produces a heart devoted to self-denial, not self-promotion. A proper understanding of the Gospel shapes our view of God and it animates our fear of God and causes us to boast only in his grace. You see, genuine reverence and awe of God springs from our comprehension of the holiness and the glory of God, especially as it relates to his mercy and his grace in our lives.

Now, with these things in mind, let's read again what the Spirit has to say to us through his inspired apostle. Verse 7, "The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer." In other words, this is crucial for your prayer life, which is essential for holy living and bringing glory to God. You know, this is a real challenge. It's a challenge for me and it's a challenge for you, especially,

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again, given our modern technologies that train our mind in shallow thinking, multi-tasking and constant distractions. No wonder our prayer life is so distracted and so superficial. You know how it is, you begin to pray and you start out good and all of a sudden your mind is on the Titans game. Your mind is somewhere else. Or you look into the word of God and suddenly your mind is somewhere else. It's like you just can't focus, you can't contemplate, and this is why so many people can't speak, they can't write deeply. This is why so many people cannot join in on the Gospel conversation. You begin to bring up spiritual things and you can tell they're desperately trying to change the subject. They are uncomfortable with all of that. They're in a panic because this is not where their heart and where their mind is.

Well, then how can we possibly commune with God effectively when we have a shallow understanding of his word, and when we have all of the clutter of this world constantly distracting our minds? We can become no different than the hypocrites in ancient Israel of whom God said in Isaiah 29:13, "These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." It's interesting in the New Testament Jesus used the same text to excoriate the hypocrites of his day.

Folks, let me be clear: if we are serious about living for the glory of God, we've got to begin to cultivate these virtues of holy living in our life; to be of sound judgment; to be of a sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. If I can digress for a second just to give you something practical, I would encourage you to pray with your Bible open; to pray as you read Scripture; to use Scripture to somehow help you verbalize the great truths that are there, that are in your heart. And also when you pray, always pray with pencil and paper. Write out your prayer requests before you pray. Write out some of the things you want to praise God for. Train your mind in focusing on those things that are truly important, rather than being distracted by things that are eternally inconsequential.

So we should anticipate Christ's return, pursue holy living, but there is something else that he would have us do to bring glory to God and that's number 3: love one another. Notice what he says in verse 8, "Above all," in other words, this is of utmost importance, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." The term "fervent" carries with it the idea of exerting maximum effort; of straining every muscle fiber in your body, like you would see with the football players as they're up in the air and they're straining to get that ball over the end zone. That's the idea. And the word "love" is derived from that great Greek word "agape." That's the love of choice, not the love of emotion; that sacrificial kind of love that requires great exertion.

Now, obviously this raises the bar of the kind of love that we should manifest for one another. This goes way beyond the superficial helloship that so often characterizes Christians in churches. Here the Spirit of God is calling us to love others like Christ loved

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the church. He's calling us to give our life, so to speak, even for sinners in rebellion to him. So this speaks of that selfless sacrificial kind of love that can only be given and only be received in the context of intentional relationships, of intentional fellowship, of real one-anothering. This is the kind of love that will overlook offenses, which is really summarized in the phrase that Peter uses, "love covers a multitude of sins." Beloved, this is speaking of a forbearing and a forgiving kind of love.

Peter goes on to give an important example of this kind of love in verse 9 and he says, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." Now, you must understand this is speaking of something much more, much further beyond just opening up your home to strangers and to guests, even though it includes that, but it carries with it the idea of having an attitude of selfless sacrifice; of having a heart that is willing to invest in the lives of other people; a heart that has a desire to really know and care for and serve and encourage and edify other people. And what a magnificent testimony this is to a lost and a dying world. It's for this reason Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

But, again, because we are selfish by nature more so than selfless, we all struggle with this. Moreover, we're crazy busy, right? I hear that all the time and I even say it, "I'm just crazy busy," and I have to fight to prioritize my life. It's like we have no time for anyone but ourselves and our family. When you add to that the superficial relationships cultivated by email, Facebook, texting, I mean, folks, we don't even talk to one another anymore, much less love one another. Go to a restaurant and just look around and I promise you, you will see as many people staring at their phone even though there is somebody in front of them, and they're probably staring at their phone too. You'll see as much of that as people that don't have a phone at all. I mean, this is what it's come to. I venture to say that it would be virtually impossible for some of you to lay aside your electronic devices for one day and focus on your spouse, or your children, or your friends, or some brother and sister in Christ. Ask your kids to set aside their devices for one week when they go to camp and watch what happens. They will instantly begin to convulse in pains of withdrawal. "I can't talk with my friends? I can't play my games? How am I gonna be affirmed? How am I gonna be entertained? I will die if I don't have that," because real life and real joy and real happiness is found in the things of this world, it's found in other people, it's not found in God. That's the attitude and, folks, it affects all of us.

Let me ask you: which would be harder for you to give up, your screens for a week, or your Bible? Some of you can't even go through a church service without texting or emailing someone or checking your social media page. And, yes, I know there are some wonderful benefits to all of this but ask yourself: am I addicted to this stuff to a point where it's controlling me, it's ruling me, and it's not deepening relationships, it's making them more superficial? It's not helping me really love others more sacrificially but more

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superficially. Is it drawing me to a more intimate fellowship with God or is it drawing me away from that? Is it consistent with giving God glory or is it really all about bringing glory to me?

God says, "Keep fervent in your love for one another. Be hospitable to one another without complaint." In other words, learn to invest in the lives of those whom God has brought you into relationship with in your family and in your church. Open up your home, open up your heart to each other. Welcome your brothers and sisters into your life. Engage them with your care and your lovingkindness and do this, he says, without grumbling, without complaint. Folks, this is what it means to live for the glory of God.

As a footnote, it also includes not trampling on the consciences of other believers who may disagree with you about certain preference issues. You will remember how Paul says in Romans 10:31, "so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God," we tend to think that that's referring to, "Well, even in the most mundane things, we need to just do it for the glory of God," but that's not what that text is talking about. The context there was the controversy among the Christians over whether or not you should eat things that had been sacrificed to idols and Paul said, "Yes, eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience." And he went on to describe how there's a broad range of Christian liberties that we have but we should humble ourselves to a more important fundamental principle. He says in verse 24, "let no one seek his own good but that of his neighbor." And he went on to explain how in all our activities, especially those that might offend another brother or sister in Christ like the divisive issues of eating and drinking in that day, he went on to say beginning in verse 32, "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many so that they may be saved." Romans 14, Romans 15, Colossians 3, speaks about the same thing. Paul says in Romans 14 we are to pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food, or you could add drink, or any other preferences that you hold to, because we are called to worship in unity, Romans 15:6, that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So all of these things are part of loving our neighbor.

Well finally, Peter instructs us to employ our spiritual gifts. This is so crucial for giving glory to God. Notice verse 10, "As each one has received a special gift," that is, a divine supernatural enablement for ministry in the body of Christ, he says, "employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold," it could be translated "the multi-colored grace of God." You see, spiritual gifts are like our fingerprints, no two believers have exactly the same fingerprint, we don't have the same spiritual gift. You might think of it this way in this context: as the Master Artist, God mixes the primary colors on his palette to create an infinite array of colors to paint his masterpiece, the church, and we're all part

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of that. Or we could use the analogy of the body that is used in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, like the human body that is made up of many parts in order to make it function properly, so too the body of Christ. Romans 12, beginning in verse 3, Paul says, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment," there is the same idea, "as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." So you get the idea.

You say, "Well, pastor, how can I discover my spiritual gift?" Get involved in the body. Begin to serve in the church and you will begin to see that there are areas where others affirm your spiritual gift. It's all about being affirmed by others, not you thinking, "Well, boy, I'm really good at this." Where you begin to bear fruit, then that's where you need to be serving. But, dear friends, those body parts that live in isolation are useless to the body. Those body parts will die out and they will ultimately weaken the body. So we need all of you and you need all of us.

Verse 10 he goes on to say, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." Your gift is not to serve yourself, it's to serve the body. Get involved in the body. Be an active member of the church.

He says, "as good stewards." What's a steward? A steward is one who is responsible for the assets and the resources of another person. You are to be a good steward of what God has given you, not only in salvation but in your spiritual gift.

Do this as good stewards, "of the manifold grace of God." Dear Christians, I would ask you: what are you doing with the spiritual resources that God has given you to manage for him? How are you employing your spiritual gifts in serving others in his body, the church?

Now, as we go back to what Peter says, these gifts can be divided into two real basic categories, speaking and serving gifts. Notice he says, "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." Obviously not by our own strength. We are dependent upon the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

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He goes on to say, "so that in all things," this includes everything he's been talking about, all of these responsibilities: anticipating Christ's return, pursuing holy living, loving one another, employing our spiritual gifts, "so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Dear friends, in closing, the very DNA of Calvary Bible Church is to be a teaching and equipping and training church so therefore we are committed to the systematic indepth teaching and preaching and application of the word of God. We see this manifested in so many, well, in all of the ministries of the church from Sunday school to the Awana hybrid that we have; the soul care ministries; the small group ministries; even the singing of doctrinally rich psalms, hymns and spirit songs. Why? So that we will anticipate Christ's return. So that we will be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose prayer. We're committed to providing opportunities for meaningful Christian service, evangelism, fellowship, especially in our small group ministries. Why? So that above all we can keep fervent in our love for one another because love covers a multitude of sins; so that we can be hospitable to one another without complaint; so that we can exercise our spiritual gifts and so forth.

Oh, child of God, this is what it means to live for the glory of God and unless you decisively commit to these things and be obedient to these things, unless you do that, you will not only forfeit power and blessing in your life but you will weaken the church and you will rob God of his rightful glory. So I would plead with you as your pastor to take heart to the things that you've heard today. You know, there should never ever be a need for volunteers at anything at Calvary Bible Church in terms of us pleading for people to help. We need to be saying, "No, no thanks. That ministry is taken care of. Let's look for something else." We should never have to plead for that. We need to be turning workers away, not begging for more. There should never be an empty space when we gather together in home fellowship groups to care and share and pray for one another, not if we understand what we have just learned.

So I challenge you to examine your heart. Ask yourself: am I living in anticipation of Christ's return? Am I committed to holy living? Am I loving my neighbors, my brothers and sisters in Christ in particular, the way God would have me do so? And am I using my spiritual gifts in the body of Christ for the glory of Christ? And wherever you feel conviction, repent and get serious about honoring him and watch what he will do. Wouldn't it be amazing if the whole church just got hold of this? I wish I could just get ahold of it more, you know? Oh, what God has in store for a people who will humble themselves before his word.

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Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these great truths. May they bear much fruit in each and every heart here at Calvary Bible Church because, Lord, it is the longing of our heart to give glory to you in all things. For it's in Christ's name that I pray. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.