

To Whom Much is Given

1 Peter 4: 10-11

Tonight we stand upon the threshold of a new year. In a couple of hours we will begin 2012. The New Year brings a time for reflection as well as anticipation. As we look back over the blessings of 2011 we certainly have much to be thankful for. God has truly blessed us with an extraordinary year. We have achieved much by His abundant help and grace.

As I look forward to the coming year, I do so with great anticipation and expectation. The God who blessed us so abundantly this past year is well able to bring continued blessing in the New Year. He is not limited or hindered by the troubles and issues that society as a whole faces. Our God is able to accomplish what He pleases, at all times and in every circumstance.

These are exciting times for our church, but for me they are humbling times as well. I am constantly reminded of one of my favorite verses in Scripture. **Luke 12:48b – For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.** You will have to agree that we have been given much, so it would stand to reason that much will be required. God has blessed us, but He expects us to use those blessings as strength and motivation for continued service.

As we consider the New Year, I am challenged with the awesome privilege and obligation we have for serving the Lord. I have been dealing personally with the need for committed servants in the coming year. We need a renewed commitment and desire for the Lord. Average congregations have an average desire and they will achieve average results. I am not satisfied with average. I want us to excel for the glory of God!

As we seek to follow the Lord's direction for the coming year, may I remind us of the last instruction He gave prior to His ascension? **Mat.28:19-20 – Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.** Peter was among those who heard those words verbally spoken of the Lord just before He was taken from them into heaven. Surely this vital instruction was on his mind as he penned these words.

I want us to consider the **instructions** that are left for our admonition in this passage as we think on the challenging thought: **To Whom Much is Given**. First Peter speaks of:

I. The Gifts we Possess (10) – As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Here he reveals several things regarding the possession of gifts. Notice:

A. Our Ability – *As every man hath received the gift.* Clearly salvation is in view as we consider the gift of God, but if that is all that we take away from this passage, then we have missed the heart of what Peter is seeking to convey. The word gift is translated from the Greek word *charisma* and it speaks of “*a very special ability given to the believer of God.*” Hence we can be certain that Peter is speaking of the abilities that God has given us to serve Him.

- Now, I want to quickly address a couple of things concerning the ability of our gifts. First of all, each of us possess a gift of God. Peter doesn't suggest that if we have received a gift; he declares that every man has received the gift. All Christians possess a gift of the Lord. Our gifts are varied, and they may even be multiple, but each of us possess at least one gift.
- So if God has given us a gift, and if we are saved He has, then He expects us to use that gift for His glory. We are given the ability to serve Him. None of us are without some ability to serve the Lord. He has gifted us in unique ways to serve Him!
- Also I want to point out the origin of that gift. Every man has *received* the gift. If we have received a gift, then that gift was given of someone. That someone is the Lord. We are not asked or expected to serve the Lord in and of our own ability.
- What a blessing that is; if we were serving the Lord within mere human ability, we would accomplish nothing of lasting value. That ought to inspire us to diligently serve Him. He has gifted us, providing the ability we need to serve Him in the capacity that He has chosen.

B. Our Activity – *even so minister the same one to another.* That is very simple and yet very profound. We are expected to use the gifts that God gives us. He has not gifted us with ability so that we might consider serving Him. He has gifted us in order to serve Him. With the gifts of God come the obligation to use those gifts. We are to put our ability into practice.

- If you are saved you are gifted with the expectation of serving the Lord. We are given individual gifts for individual service. No one can do what God has called us to do. We need to be busy serving the Lord in the capacity He has enabled us. *Mat.25:14-15 – For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. [15] And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

C. Our Accountability – *as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* We are called upon to be good stewards of the gifts God has blessed us with. A steward speaks of “*one who was placed in charge of the estate of another, both the household and possessions, a manager of*

the estate.” We have been entrusted with a particular portion of the estate. We have been given a unique gift and we are accountable to the Lord for that gift.

- That is a humbling thought. God has called and gifted me to do a work that no other has been called to perform. Others will not answer to God for the gifts I have been given, but I will. If my work is left undone, if those whom God has given me the ability to reach are neglected, if my talents are buried in the sand and unused, I will stand before God and give account to Him for my lack of activity according to my ability. **For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.** We will stand accountable to God for our use of the gifts He has given.
- Consider again [Mat.25:14-30](#). Clearly this is speaking of those who have spurned the greatest gift of salvation, but we see the principle of accountability for our gifts as well.

I. The Gifts we Possess (10)

II. The Grace we Proclaim (11) – Here Peter deals with the manner in which we proclaim and identify with our Lord. Once again we discover valuable instruction regarding our walk with the Lord and the expectations associated with it. Consider:

A. Our Duty to Speak Honestly (11a) – [If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God](#); That is an interesting thought. Isn't it amazing the vastness of the Scriptures? God addresses every aspect of our lives. Here we are taught how to speak regarding the things of the Lord. We are to [speak as the oracles of God](#). This refers to “*a divine utterance*.” This word is used in reference to the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament, [Acts 7:38](#). It is also used in reference to New Testament doctrine, [Heb.5:12](#).

- Peter is speaking of the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. We are instructed to teach according to the direction and filling of the Holy Spirit. Surely as those who handle the Word of God, we ought to seek a proper interpretation and teach the Word with the authority of the Holy Spirit.
- Now I realize that all are not called to teach or expound the Scriptures. All are not gifted in that area, but I do believe there is appropriate application for all believers in this passage. We need to live and stand according to the Word of God. We need to proclaim the truth of His Word without apology. There is much being shared today that is not found within the Word.

Many are seeking to please men rather than being faithful to the truth of the Word. This world doesn't need a message that makes them feel good about the life they are living; they need a message that reveals where they are living. We need to see ourselves in light of a holy God and according to His righteous standard. In the coming year may we proclaim the truth of God's inerrant Word with boldness!

B. Our Duty to Serve Courageously (11b) – *if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth*: As we look at this passage in its context, Peter is dealing with the suffering of believers for the cause of Christ. *V.1 – Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*; We are well aware that the early church faced intense persecution and opposition. Many abandoned their faith and the work of God due to the adversity they faced. Peter reminds them of the source of their strength. If they are ministering according to the gifts of God, they are standing in His strength. Trouble and adversity were certain, but the grace and sufficiency of God was greater than the trials they faced.

- We live in an age that is growing increasingly intolerant of our faith and our Christian values. The world sees us as a hindrance to their progress and a challenge to their agenda. Much of the world would rather the church cease to exist. Serving the Lord will continue to be faced with increasing opposition, but we have the assurance of the grace of God to provide the strength and wisdom we need to press on in the fight.
- Remember that we are not serving the Lord of our own accord; we are equipped with the gifts of God and His guidance. If God has called you, He will equip you for service. We need to stand courageously for the Lord and continue to serve Him even in the face of adversity.

C. Our Duty to Shine Graciously (11c) – *that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*. Peter has dealt with their words and their works, and now he addresses their witness. He reminds the church of its duty to shine graciously among this dark world for the glory of God that Christ may be exalted and glorified. Many who read the words of Peter in that day would be called upon to give their lives for their faith. Many would likely stand before Nero and be sentenced to death for their refusal to deny the Lord. Peter sought to encourage them to be an example and testimony to the goodness of God in the worst of situations.

- I suppose such persecution may be probable, but it is unlikely that we would face such a decision here in America, but the challenge remains the same. We will be faced with adversity and mounting opposition. We will be called upon to stand in defense of our faith. There will be those who seek to undermine and destroy our faith, but we must persevere.

- We need to be reminded that our stand for truth must be seasoned with grace. We must ensure that we present a positive witness for the Lord even when we are challenged and mistreated. In all that we do and above all else we must glorify the Lord we serve. We are to represent the goodness and grace of God in every situation and circumstance.
- Keep in mind that light shines the brightest when it is darkest. In the darkest hour a small amount of light will provide vast illumination. [Mat.5:16 – Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.](#) [1 Cor. 6:20 – For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.](#)

Tonight we stand on the threshold of a New Year. I am sure that there will be great opportunities in the year to come, but I am also aware that we will inevitably face a measure of opposition and difficulty. All the redeemed have been gifted of the Lord for service. We have the assurance of His strength and the obligation to serve Him. I pray that we will represent our Lord well in all that we do. May we proclaim His Word with boldness and shine for Him in this dark hour.

Do you sense a need in your life tonight? Has the Spirit spoken to you regarding your service to the Lord? Do you desire to accomplish more for His glory this coming year than you have in the past? If so I would encourage you to come and seek His help and guidance in your life. I can think of no better way to begin the New Year than in prayer and supplication unto the Lord.