

# Because the Time is Short – Serve One Another Faithfully

*Our Identity in Christ*

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For a number of weeks. The last Sunday we took a Sunday off to worship Christ for the resurrection, but today we return back to 1 Peter 4:7 to 11 and this passage, which we've titled the messages, "Time is Short," because of the first sentence in this text is telling us that time is short, and he's telling us how to live in light of that. And so we've seen that there, as we did an overview in the first week of this passage, that there are really three things. Time is short, and because time is short, because you understand time is short, you need to do three things. First of all, pray. Because time is short, we need to devote ourselves to prayer. And then secondly, because time is short, we need to love one another fervently and we looked at that two weeks ago, the importance of loving one another, and today we come to the third element in this exhortation because of the shortness of time. Today the title of the message is, "Time is Short, Serve One Another Faithfully." Serve one another. So as we read the text, you'll see this. He calls us because of the time, the shortness of time to live soberly, to see things as they are and if we see things as they are with the eminence of Christ's return, it'll affect the way we live. It'll make us people of prayer. It'll make us people who are diligent in service and also fervent in love.

So let's read 1 Peter 4 verses 7 to 11.

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; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray.

*My Father, we come to You this morning seeking Your grace, seeking Your strength, the strength which You supply, that we might hear from Your word, that we might understand more clearly the wonder of what Christ has done for us, the calling that He's placed upon us, that we might be more faithful to the tasks which He's given us, and ultimately that we might love You more supremely, and we might live to Your glory. So use this time, Lord, in Your word, to those purposes. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.*

So time is short, serve one another faithfully. We're going to need two Sundays, I think, to cover this message, but we're going to start in today looking at this, the importance of serving one another, and as we think about, you know, the letter of 1 Peter we've noted, Peter is writing to believers at a time of great difficulty. They are experiencing cultural and societal opposition, hostility for their faith. It's not easy to be a Christian in the Roman world in 63 AD when Peter writes this letter. And so, as we look around us and see a world that's becoming increasingly hostile to our Christian faith here in the year 2024, this word speaks with a special poignancy and relevance because it's telling us how to live in the midst of this kind of opposition, this kind of spiritual darkness.

And one of the things that we see in this passage, he's been telling us that throughout the letter, a key theme is suffering. God is going to bring suffering into our lives. Suffering has a good purpose. It's not something to be surprised that we're going to see a little bit later, the next verse we're going to go to is don't be surprised at the fiery trial that comes upon you. It's not to be surprising. It's a part of life with God in a fallen world. The only way you can grow and be in holiness and righteousness is through suffering. And so that's part of what he's telling us and that looks like bad news on the surface, but it's not. It's good news because suffering drives us to Christ. Suffering enables us to see what really matters. And so Peter has been talking about that throughout the letter, and he's been talking about the opposition that we face and we can sometimes be discouraged, we can be disillusioned by the decline of society that we see around us, the spiritual darkness in the lives of people we care about that we want to see come to faith. The spiritual darkness we see in our world can be so discouraging and he tells us, though, not to be discouraged. We are to be about God's work. We're to be encouraged in the moment. We live in a moment of great opportunity. That's the thrust of Peter's letter. He wants us, by God's grace, to rise to the occasion, to the great moment in which God has placed us.

God does all things well, and he's placed you at the place in history he intended to place you, to use you for his glory, and we need to embrace that. And that's what he's calling us to do. Well, part of that is to say, as we just heard, this urgent statement, this really stunning statement, time is short. That is when he says in verse 7, the end of all things is near, we've seen that that means the end of all things has drawn near. It has come right up to where we are. It's as if Peter is saying the return of Christ is imminent and because the return of Christ is imminent, he gives two major imperatives, two major commands in this passage, and they are in verse 7. The most important verbs in these five verses are the two verbs in verse 7, be of sound judgment and be of sober spirit. Be of sound judgment and be of sober spirit. Because time is short, have a right mindset about the shortness of time. That's what it means to be of sound judgment. Think correctly about the limited time. Know that time is short, and think about that, when you know you only have so

much time to accomplish something, you've got to make it happen within that time. He's saying, think like that. And then be sober. That is, don't be influenced to see things in an unclear way, the same way that substances can cause us to be altered in our senses. He says, don't allow the world to alter you in your senses. Be sober. See things as they are.

So those are the key commands and he says, if you see things as they are, time is short, if you see things as they are, you will devote yourselves really to prayer, to love, and to service, and so today we're focusing on this aspect of service. We're to serve one another. In fact, I wanted to use another word for it and to say we're to minister to one another, that the key word in our passage is the word translated serving. I'm reading the New American Standard. Most translations translate it serving. Verse 10, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." That word is repeated in verse 11 when 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." The word is used three times. The word service or serving, it's actually the verb diakoneo, It would transliterate that D-I-A-K-O-N-E-O, diakoneo. That's the word from which we get our word deacon, the office of deacon. It's the diakonos. Diakoneo means to serve, but it also has the idea of ministry and so what he's saying here in this verse, is he's teaching something that the New Testament teaches a number of places, and that is that every Christian is called to a life of service. Every Christian is called to a life of service. Every Christian is called to see himself as a servant. Every Christian is to be devoted to service. Now, another way of saying that is, every Christian is called to ministry. In fact, the King James, the New King James, transliterate those two words, serving, those three times it occurs as ministering. Diakoneo can be translated ministry. In fact, it's often translated that way in the New Testament. Ministry.

So, one of the teachings of the New Testament is, every Christian, if you're called to a life of service, you're really called to a life of ministry. Every believer. We're not called to be spectators. We're called to be servants. We're called to be ministers. It's a high calling. It's a wonderful calling. And God gives us all the grace that we need to fulfill the calling, but we need to see the seriousness of this calling. So understanding that we're all called to every member ministry, a passage you might make a note of and familiar verse for many would be Ephesians 4:11 and 12 where you see the same concept of every member ministry and how certain gifts are set apart to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Ephesians 4:11 says, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the building up of the body of Christ for the work of ministry, for the building up of the saints for the work of ministry," that the teaching gifts in the church are there to build up all of the saints, that is, all Christians, for the work of ministry. We're all called to minister.

So now, understanding that, time is short, minister to one another faithfully. Serve one another faithfully, minister to one another faithfully. I want us to look this morning, there's two main points, and the second point is going to have a longer, it's got several sub-points, but the two main points, and the first point is the focus of your ministry. The focus of your ministry. As I said, next week we'll dig into this, we'll continue with points three and four, but today point one and two.

The first point, the focus of your ministry. He says in verse 10, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." Serving one another. It's interesting if you notice as you read, as we read the text, that that phrase, "one another," occurs three times in this passage. It occurs in verse 8, "keep fervent in your love for one another." Verse 9, "Be hospitable to one another." Verse 10, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." The first and last are one Greek term which literally could be translated "yourselves," but it has the force of "one another," and the middle term is actually a word which actually literally means "one another." So the idea is, he's saying, keep fervent in your love for yourselves, be hospitable to one another, be serving yourself, but he doesn't mean like you individually, he means he's using this phrase for self to say one another, but in a very personal way.

When we serve each other, we're serving ourselves because we're one body but the key thing is here, the focus of your ministry, because time is short, because time is short, he says, get to work on the church and I shared before, I think it's a little bit counter-intuitive. Because time is short, don't we need to go out and rescue as many people as we can? Well, yes, that's true. But he's saying the way that we go about it is we actually focus on the church. You focus on your ministry and through that, as we pursue oneness, the world will see that we are the people of God, and the gospel will go forth, and we will have opportunities to share a reason for the hope that is within you. We'll be able to preach the gospel. But he's saying, focus on brothers and sisters.

So as the world gets darker, as the world gets more difficult, if we go into periods of, you know, persecution, if we go into periods of economic unrest, whatever, make sure you focus on serving your brothers and sisters. In fact, this emphasis on one another is really strong. The word order in the phrase actually, you know, in English we can't move word order around as much as you can in other languages and in Greek, you can move the word order all over the place, and you do it for emphasis. And the way the phrase, serving one another, actually appears in the Greek, it appears this way. He says after he says that, "each one has received a special gift," so we've received a spiritual gift, which we're going to talk about more next time. You've received a spiritual gift. Now he's going to say, the English says, "employ it in serving one another," but the Greek says, "as you received a special gift, one another, it, minister." That's the word order. One another, it, minister. That is one another, it, your spiritual gift, serve with. Use your gift for one another, but the emphasis falls on one another. In fact, the same word order is in verse 8. When he says, "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another," the word order in Greek is, "one another, fervent love, keeping." Peter is saying, "Listen, get your heart focused on where you're supposed to focus as things are getting darker, as time is short. You only have so much time." If you only had 24 hours to live and you knew it, what would you do? Peter says, if you only had 24 hours to live, what should you do? Focus on the body of Christ. That's what he's saying.

The focus of your ministry is the church. Of course, we're here to be salt and light and we're to preach the gospel to everyone that we can, but we're to start serving here and building the body. So the idea is, if you think about this, the emphasis on loving one

another, we saw this two weeks ago when we looked at this passage, he says, be fervent in your love for one another because love, I mean keep holding fervent love for one another. Remember I talked about actually the verb is holding. It's not loving. It's holding and the idea is like they're carrying, you're carrying around love and you're holding it for when you need it and he says, when you're going to need that love that you're carrying around is when your brothers sin because that's the whole point. Why are you carrying around fervent love for one another? Verse 8, because love covers a multitude of sins. Good news, you're going to have an opportunity to use that love because your brothers and sisters are going to sin against you. You're going to sin against them. I mean, we are saved sinners that are being sanctified, that are being made holy, but until we die, we're going to battle with sin. And so we have to, when you see sin in your brother, what do you do? You are to love them fervently. You're to have that fervent love you've been carrying around and you're just to give it freely.

Now here's the other side of it is, not only when you see sin, how do you respond to your brothers and sisters, love, that's what we saw two weeks ago. When you see need. When you see some deficiency, some need in their life, what do you do? You serve them. So now you're carrying your gift around, as it were. You're carrying love in one hand and your gift in the other and you're just waiting for places to use it. And when you run into sin, it's love. Now it doesn't mean that, remember we said love doesn't mean that you don't reprove. Sometimes you have to rebuke someone, confront them over their sin. Love does that. But it's love, it's motivated by love, a desire to bless this person, not to seek revenge or retaliation.

So you're carrying around love, and when you see sin, you love. You're carrying around your gift, and when you see a need, you serve. That's the picture. You minister. But the focus of your ministry is the body of Christ. And you know, you think about the shortness of time. Like I said, I think it's counter-intuitive. It's not the way I would expect it. Because there's only so much time, he doesn't say, go out on the street corner and preach, and there's a place for going out on the street corner and preaching. I'm not saying that's not the case. But he's saying, in your heart, have a disposition to look around you for needs in the body and serve your brothers and sisters.

So you're loving when you see sin, you're serving when you see need, and what happens is the bride of Christ, think about this, the shortness of time, if Jesus is coming back, what's happening? What's he coming back for? His bride. Time is short, get the bride ready. Jesus is coming back for his bride. I mean, think about, you know, we've had a lot of babies born. We've had some weddings and stuff, too. And when you see the wonder of the joy of a child coming into the world, the joy of mentioned now, they're engaged. And, you know, I think Mary Chase on the day of her wedding will be, you know, they're always the scheduling of the hair and the makeup and all of that, the thing that ladies do and we're grateful for as guys. We don't have to do, you know, guys can always come late to the wedding. It's like girls show up, 9 a.m., guys show up at 12:30. What's the difference? It's getting ready. It's becoming ready for the beauty of the marriage that's going to happen, right? And so that's a beautiful thing. And so he's saying, "Listen, time is short, the groom is coming, make the bride ready." That's how we're to think. Care for

the body, another metaphor of Christ, right, in the New Testament. Care for the body. Build up the body.

How can we make a difference in the world? The body's got to be healthy and as the body is healthy and the bride is beautiful, what happens is the gospel attracts. God does attract unbelievers when he sees us loving one another, sees us caring for one another, sees us visiting one another, and what happened with them is they went into persecution. They would visit one another in prison. They would care for one another and show hospitality to one another when they were losing their jobs, losing their possessions. And a lost world saw these people living like family who were not family, not by blood, but something far deeper, by the Holy Spirit, and then the world is drawn to that.

So the focus of your ministry, he says, time is short, serve the body, love the body, and particularly the focus of your ministry, minister to the body. Second point this morning, not just the focus of your ministry, but the manner of your ministry and here we'll have five sub points. This is how. You know, the focus of your ministry is where you'd be focused when you serve. Where? The church. This is how. How do you go about your ministry? I think we'll see five attitudes that we need to manifest as we minister that flow out of this passage. How do we minister? How do we, as we focus on loving others as we see their sin, as we focus on serving others as we see their need, how do we go about that?

The first attitude is humility. So 2A, humility. It's really in the word itself and the emphasis of the word. I mentioned the word is used three times, the word "service," and I said it's the word diakoneo, from which we get our English word deacon, and to do the serving means literally to wait upon tables. This is the most common way of deaconing, as it were, in that day. It meant to wait upon a table. It meant to offer yourself for the interests and needs of others, to devote yourself to caring for someone else's needs and in that, there is an obvious overriding humility where you're putting others' needs above your own. I mean, we see this, you go to a restaurant and a good server or waiter or waitress is someone who is able to meet the needs of the people there, anticipate, you know, they're out of water, I'm going to bring some water, is this cooked to your liking, etc. You're focused on bringing this person satisfaction and it's not about the person waiting. It's not like they say, "Listen, I know you want something, but I'm really going to just go sit down for a minute, I need to chill, I've got, I just want to take a minute for myself." I mean, they have to do that, but they don't tell you that, right? That's not something you say to your table you're waiting on. No, they're focused on serving the other person. He's calling us, all Christians are to have a mindset like a waiter waiting on a table, and it's every other Christian is the guest. This is the mindset of humility. We're to place others' needs above our own.

It's interesting, I mentioned the word occurs three times and it's really, there's an interesting contrast that we need to see. He says in verse 10, "As each one is received a special gift, employ it in serving." As each one has received a gift, use it in serving, and it's the word diakoneo. And then he's going to talk about two categories of spiritual gifts in the next verse and there are two major categories of spiritual gifts, and we'll look at

this more carefully next time, but just for the sake of understanding this today, the two categories of spiritual gifts are serving and speaking. He talks about speaking first, then serving. Verse 10, "Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies." So, they're speaking gifts and they're serving gifts and all the gifts that you'll find in other passages, and you might want to look at these this week, Romans 12:6 to 8, 1 Corinthians 12:4 to 11, 28 to 31, and Ephesians 4:7 to 12. Our key passage is to look at spiritual gifts and when we talk about spiritual gifts, these various gifts fall into these two categories, serving gifts and speaking gifts. Speaking gifts are gifts like teaching, exhortation, prophesying, preaching, pastoring, counseling. Those are speaking gifts. Serving gifts are things like helps, something just called service, administration, meeting practical needs. So serving gifts meet practical needs, physical needs more or less. Teaching gifts or speaking gifts meet spiritual needs. Serving the word of God, as it were, serving maybe tables, actual bread, food, practical needs.

So there's two types of gifts, he says. there are speaking gifts and they're serving gifts. It's interesting that speaking gifts, if you have a speaking gift, you know how you're supposed to use it? The same way a serving gift is, like a servant because verse 10, he says, whatever kind of gift you receive, whether you receive a speaking gift or a serving gift, employ it in serving. Be a diakonos. Act like a waiter as you serve. The mindset of lowly and humble service. This is the manner in which we are to use our gifts. We're to do our ministry by serving. And one of the things, I want to say a word about this because we're going to talk about this more next time, but it's a question that often comes up and I just want to lay this down today. A lot of times folks will say, "You know, how do I know what my spiritual gift is?" And you may have experienced some consternation over that, wondering about that. You may have received instruction about that where you took spiritual gifts tests. I'm not saying that those are, you know, a bad thing. I don't think they're as helpful as people think they tend to be. But it's not that they can't provide some help but I think what you're going to see is the way the New Testament assumes this happens is that you will discover your gift not before you serve. We can think like that, right? "I don't know what to do because I don't know what my gift is. If I only knew what my gift was, I would do something." Seems like kind of an American way of thinking about things. The New Testament mindset is completely different. Don't try to discover your gift. Meet needs. Discover needs, and move to meet them, and God will affirm your gift. He'll clarify as you move toward people.

So you don't wait. In the urgency of this passage, time is short. You don't have time to sit and think, "If I only could get my gift figured out." No, time is short. We've got to get to work, right? We've got to serve. So he's saying, and the way is to think about it is, "Lord, you know, I'm trying to have love. I'm trying to fill my heart with love for my brothers and sisters. I want to be a humble servant, show me needs, and then move me to action." And we don't just say move me, we say move me as we get moving toward it. You see the need, you go ahead and try to meet it. I mean, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, of course, always. But you move, you don't wait.

So, but it's humility and this is really what Jesus is saying that I said earlier, we're all called to minister, we're all called to be servants, to see ourselves as servants, to see that our life is to be a life of service, a life of ministry, and the attitude of a minister is not what we would naturally think because we all as sinners are prideful. In fact, it's interesting, you see this parallel too as you're maybe looking at 1st Corinthians 12, 13, 14, you see this that the Corinthians were struggling with pride because of their spiritual gifts. This is one of the problems they had and Paul writes 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14 to deal with spiritual gifts. It's the fullest discussion on spiritual gifts in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 12, 14, two chapters. And they were taking their gifts and using them as a reason to look down on other people and Paul's like, "You are completely, you guys are completely upside down in this. You're misunderstanding what spiritual gifts are all about." Spiritual gifts are not about propping up the person with the gift, elevating him in stature, not at all. Spiritual gifts are about God equipping us to love and serve others, and to take the attitude of lowly service.

So 1 Corinthians 12, he starts out talking about spiritual gifts, and 1 Corinthians 14, he deals with, you really need to pursue prophecy because it's more edifying than tongues. And so then, and we'll explain about that next time, but in between, he sandwiches the great chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13. And I love how he begins that chapter. Think about this. Think about how gifts, how important gifts are. He says, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," think about that. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, if I had the eloquence, the eloquence, the most eloquent man in the world, if I'm so eloquent that I had the eloquence of angels but do not have love, I am, it profits me nothing." And then he goes on to say, "If I have the gift of knowledge, and have all knowledge or to get to prophecy and have all knowledge and all understanding, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains." Think about that ability to teach and think about that insight into the Scriptures. "If I have, I can understand all mysteries. I have all faith. I can actually move mountains with my faith, but do not have love. I am nothing. If I offer my body to be burned, give all my possessions away, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." That's how he starts off chapter 13. Look, he said spiritual gifts are far secondary to love and in the same way, Peter himself said, "Above all, keep fervent in your love, and then after getting that straight, now use your gifts." But the whole attitude of the Christian is that whatever gift you have, you're to use it like a servant, the mindset of a lowly servant who is just wanting to put others' interests and others' needs and to serve those for the glory of God.

So humility. Jesus said in Matthew 20, the disciples are arguing about who's going to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them," Matthew 20:25. "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you." I love that. He didn't say it's not to be this way among you. He said it is not this way among you. Indicative. It's just not that way in the body. You come to me, it's not that way. Not to be lording it over, exercising authority. "It's not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave." When he says, be your servant, that's the word diakonos. Whoever wishes to be first among you, to become great among you shall be



your servant, and then he takes it even lower, "Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave," your *doulos*, bond slave, "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve," *diakoneo* again. He didn't come to be served, he came to serve. He didn't come to be waited upon, he came to wait upon tables. That's what he's saying. The greatness of our God, the majesty and power and awesome holiness of our God, and yet he stoops down to serve his creature and those who follow in, he said, "Come follow Me. A servant is not greater than his master. You're to live like I live. You're to be like Me, conformed to My image." And what does that mean? You become more and more content and joyful in lowly service.

Humble. Humility. That's the first attitude. The second attitude also really in the verb itself is diligence. You don't come half-heartedly. We said the word back in 1 Peter 4, the words used there, it's in the Greek present tense. Employ it in serving. As I said, it really means one another, it, ministering. You're ministering it, that is your gift to one another, for one another. It's in the Greek present tense, just like the command of beholding love was in the Greek present tense. And I mentioned before, but remind you that in Greek, the tenses of verbs are not about the time of action as much as the kind of action. In English, it's more about time, present, past, future, present time, past time, future time. In Greek, there's an element of time, but the main emphasis is on the kind of action, and the Greek present tense emphasizes continual action and the main verbs in this letter were in the perfect tense. "The end of all things has come near," in verse 8. "Be of sound judgment, sober spirit," both in the aorist tense. Get your mind right. Get your mind right. It means a decisive moment. And now, if you've got your mind right, you will go on continually holding love, and you'll go on continually serving if your mind is right. So it's continual, it pictures diligent, faithful effort. You're going to keep working at it. You're going to keep serving. When there's a need, you're not going to do a little bit and quit. You're going to keep on serving diligently.

So it's humility, it's diligence, third attitude is hospitality. Verse 9, kind of a bridge between loving and serving. "Be hospitable to one another without complaint." He's talking about our attitudes again. We need to have an attitude of hospitality. Now, it's important for us to understand what this word means. We have a pretty good idea from our English word, but it's not exactly the same. In fact, the word in Greek literally is a compound word which means to love the stranger. *Philoxenos*. *Philos* is a word for love. *Phileo*, love. *Philadelphia*, love of the brother, brotherly love. *Philos* is a word for love. It's companionship, love. It's deep affection. And *xenos*, X-E-N-O-S, is stranger.

So the love of the stranger is where the word hospitality came from and so the idea is, especially back in that day when you didn't have hotels everywhere, restaurants everywhere. In fact, I remember, you know, I'm old enough to remember when there wasn't a fast food restaurant in every corner around here. I mean, you had to drive to Dorival to go to McDonald's. Some of you don't know where Dorival is because you haven't had to go there to go to McDonald's. We used to have to. So you ate at home all the time. You know, you didn't eat out all the time. Well, our culture's changed a lot, right? Well, even more back then. I mean, there were inns, but they were few and far between. Conditions were varied. And so hospitality was something that was much more

needed and necessary in ancient times. You see this as you read through the Old Testament, how people would wait in the square when they'd go to a town, and they would wait for somebody to say, "Come to my house. You can bring your animals to my barn. You can stay with me." Hospitality. So he's getting at that, and that was a part of Greco-Roman culture as well. So it meant to love the stranger. It meant that you were willing to be a friend to the stranger and bring them into your house.

Now, what's interesting here is he's saying be hospitable to whom? To one another. Well, you're not a stranger to other believers that you know in your body. So he's not really talking so much about the love of the stranger, but what he's talking about is when, because the stranger is a good word, it's rich, because back in that day, you're away from home, you don't have provisions, you may have some money, but it's not always easy to go buy the things that you need anyway, and so you are in need of food and shelter and the necessities of life, dependent on the weather, how much more urgent is that? And so you are in need, obvious need. That's what's true, and hospitality meets that obvious need. So what he's saying is, as you focus your ministry on the body of Christ, and you focus on serving, he's saying, have a heart that has an open door to your brothers and sisters. He's talking about an attitude. In fact, there's not really a verb in verse 9. It doesn't say... the "be" is implied. It's really just "hospitable to one another without complaint." Kind of flowing from love. If you're loving and you're covering a multitude of sins, you have an attitude of hospitality, and therefore you're serving and I took it with serving because hospitality meets practical needs.

It's interesting too, he says without complaint, or the other translations, I like this better, say without grumbling. The word actually is the word normally translated grumbling in the New Testament. Grumbling is a key word in the Old Testament too, and I think when Peter uses it, he uses it intentionally to recall to mind how deadly and destructive grumbling is. What is it to grumble? I love the word itself. Here, the word is just like in English. The word grumble is an onomatopoeic word. That is onomatopoeia. Some of you will remember back in grammar school when you were doing language art studies and you talked about onomatopoeia. I don't know how many of you can spell it but you may remember it. That's when a word sounds like the word it describes. Classic example is the word B-U-Z-Z, buzz. You see, it's to say it is to actually speak the sound it describes. And words are effective that way. Well, the word grumble in English is like that. The word in Greek here, goggusmos, is the same way. It's like murmur. That's a good onomatopoeic word for the same thing. Murmuring could be translated here too. Murmur. What's that mean? Someone's talking lowly. You can't make out what they're saying, but you can hear they're saying something. And you know what this is, we all do this at times: we are complaining under our breath. "I can't believe this has happened. I cannot believe this has happened." Really? And you're not saying it that loud, right? You're saying it under your breath. "Really? I can't believe this is happening. I'm so upset. Why did they say that? Why did they do that?" Whatever. Whatever it is.

That's grumbling and here he's saying that when you see a need, a need becomes evident and someone needs hospitality, the natural reaction of the sinful human heart is to grumble. It's to complain. It's to think, "Oh no, not this." Now think about this,

hospitality. I think it's good to think about it in terms of even hospitality. In the day, let's imagine we lived back like in Abraham's day or in the New Testament day when you would have to travel and you go to a city and you don't know anybody there and you have to stop because it's time to stop, and it's not safe to stay outside the city walls. You go inside the city so that you're safe from bandits because the police force isn't operating like it does in the United States. You've got to get inside the city walls, and then you're waiting for somebody now, because you still don't feel that much safer in the city walls. You're safer than you were outside, but you're still not completely safe, and you're subject to elements, and you don't have any food, and you wait for somebody to come get you. And somebody's going home from work. Now, of course, they're always at home already, but they're in town for whatever reason. I hadn't thought through all the aspects of this analogy. Sorry. So they're passing by, and this guy's thinking, "Man, I'm so worn out. It's been such a long day. I can't wait to get home. My wife's making my favorite meal. You know, she's got, say it's steak." And you know how much steak she has, because steak's expensive, "And I know what she's cooking, and I can't wait to get there. I can't wait to put my feet up and watch the basketball game on TV. That's what I'm going to do tonight." All right, so you're going and you see somebody there and the thought hits you, "They need somewhere to stay. Doesn't look like they have any food. I can't believe this is happening. I had such a good night planned." You see, that's grumbling.

So what we're supposed to do is cultivate a mindset that says when I see that need and I feel that desire, I immediately put it to death, go to Christ and the cross, and I rejoice that the Lord has given me an opportunity to do what he created me to do, called me to do, which is to serve. I have an opportunity to go home and share my steak with this friend, to share my time, to share my home, to take the time that I was going to use to rest and now use it in serving. He's saying that's the mindset we need to have toward one another in the body of Christ and there are needy people sometimes, right? You end up bringing somebody into your life, and there's a lot of need, and it takes up a lot of time, and he's saying, open the doors of your heart joyfully. Now, it doesn't mean that you let people run over you. There are balancing truths of Scripture. No, love also challenges people and encourages people to do what they're supposed to do, speaks the truth, and speaks it boldly and firmly, but the attitude of the heart is, "Welcome into my life." You see need, you welcome it. You see sin in someone's life, you love them, you reprove them if necessary, but you cover it with love. This is what he's calling us to.

So hospitality, humility, diligence, hospitality, D, fourthly, dependence. Dependence, you can't do this in your own strength. It makes this really clear in verse 11 with the two clauses. He says, "Whoever speaks is to do so as the one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as the one who is serving by the strength which God supplies." That first phrase, I mean the first part of the sentence, "Whoever speaks is to do so as the one who is speaking the utterances of God," there are various possible meanings for what he means as who's speaking the utterances of God and we're going to talk about that a little more next time, but I think one of the key things to help us interpret that is the next sentence, "whoever serves is to do so as the one who is serving by the strength which God supplies." The idea, I think, in both terms, at least part of what he's saying there is when you speak, you do so trusting in God to give you the words. Doesn't

mean that you don't study and all of that. No, no, no. But it means as you speak, you're trusting in God to work through you in the same way that when you serve, you are to serve and meet practical needs with the strength which God is supplying. You're asking the Lord actively for strength as you get that person and bring them into your life and you meet their needs. "Lord, give me strength. Lord, give me words."

So you must do it in dependence. We can't do it in our own strength. We can't do the work of God in our own human energy and ability. That's why he gives us this gift of grace. We're to use the gift that he's given us, empowered by the Spirit with the power that God gives. That's the beauty of what he says here. The reality is Christ supplies everything that you need in the Christian life. You know, the same way that he saves you, you're saved by grace. If you have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ, you've been born again, that means that you have been saved by grace alone. No merit. Zero. All the merit is in Christ, his righteousness. He took your sin and paid for it and in exchange, he gives you his righteousness freely and so you're saved by grace alone through faith alone. It's just trusting. It's not works. It's just believing and believing into Christ and depending upon him. That's how you're saved, right? That's how you come to be accepted with God forever. You come to be his child by grace alone, through faith alone. How do you live the Christian life? How do you minister to practical needs of others? How do you speak the truth to others? By grace alone, through faith alone. Yeah, it involves effort, but even as you're studying to say something, to teach if you're going to teach, as you study, you do so in an attitude of complete dependence. "Lord, show me. Teach me. Lord, help me understand this. Lord, help me say this in the way that they'll be able to receive it." As you're serving practically, "Lord, empower me. Give me the strength. I'm worn out. I don't have the ability, Lord, to do what I need to do here. Help me." And you're clinging to the Lord, and you're doing that.

That's what he's talking about and when you do it this way, then God gets all the glory, which is what he's talking about at the end, "so that in all things God may be glorified." All things are from him and through him and to him, and certainly our ministry is to be that way. We're to exhibit humility in the way we serve one another. We're to exhibit diligence. We're to exhibit hospitality. We're to exhibit dependence, and finally, faithfulness. The fifth attitude, 2E, faithfulness. He says, "employ in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." We're to be serving continually, diligently, as good stewards. This word, steward, is a very important word. It means a household manager. It's a manager, not an owner. That's the key concept. A steward does not own that which he has received. It's not his prerogative to do with it as he wishes. He's been entrusted with something that belongs to someone else, and he is to manage it according to the owner's instructions and his prerogatives.

So he's saying when you use your gifts, you're to do it in a way that seeks to honor what God has done. You're to be faithful. This is important. This is one of the things that actually helps with humility, again, to remember that whatever your gift is, it was a gift. In fact, the word special gift in the New American Standard, "as each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another," special gift actually, it just really says gift, but the word gift is charisma. Charis, c-h-a-r-i-s-m-a, charisma. The English word

charisma. But in Greek, it means a gift of grace. It's that which results from grace and so he's saying, as each one has received a grace gift, same words used. There are other words as well, but the same words used in 1 Corinthians 12 to speak of grace gifts. In Ephesians 4, there's this movement back and forth from these two different words for gifts, and charis, charisma, is one of them.

So he's saying, you are a steward of a gift of grace employed as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Actually, there's the word charis. So you have charisma and charis in the same verse. Grace is charis and the gift is charisma. You've received grace. Be good stewards of this, and I love this, manifold grace, this beautiful grace, this multi-colored grace. You're to be good stewards of the multi-colored grace of God. What he's saying is that God in his perfect wisdom, his grace gifts that he has given, have created this beautiful variegated or multicolored tapestry in the church, and you as the one who's received the particular color that you have received a gift, you are to use it as a good steward so that God's glory and the beauty of his design will be on display. If you don't do it, if you don't use it, you're holding back some color. It's like art that's had some of it blotted out. A masterpiece needs to be seen with all of the light thrown on it and you and I are called to throw the light on the particular part of God's masterpiece he's called us to light up.

Use your gift as stewards. It doesn't matter if you don't feel like it. If it was yours and belonged to you, maybe you could decide not to use it, but it's not yours, it's not mine. The gifts that we have, God has entrusted to us and when the need comes, you know what he's saying? Get to work. I know you don't think it's a convenient time. You want to grumble and complain? Stop grumbling, stop complaining, serve joyfully, serve gladly and know that in doing so somehow this particular timing of this moment that, you know, to get back to my illustration, going home to eat the steak, watch the ball game. Now I'm going to have less of the steak, maybe he's got a big family, I'm going to not be eating any steak and we're not going to be watching the ball game but God has something better in store. And by embracing that, there's something beautiful going to be displayed. God's beauty is going to be set on display. In fact, it's interesting, even the word for good that he uses, good stewards of the manifold grace of God, the word good, there's two key words in the New Testament that are for good, both are used throughout. This one, this particular word is kalos, and it means good in the sense of beautiful. Be good stewards. Even your stewardship is beautiful. This word emphasizes more beauty than it does utility. The other words more about utility, how functional it is. Both imply both, but this emphasizes, puts shades on beauty.

So he's saying when you're faithful, to see yourself as a steward, God's given me this gift, and here I am, and here's the need. Clearly, I've got to use it, though I might not want to in the moment. I kill my desire to grumble. I rejoice in what he's doing. I see his providential hand. I know he's doing something good. I move toward the gift, and no matter how it seems to turn out, he's going to get glory. He's going to get praise. I'm going to grow. This person's going to be blessed. In some way, God's doing something, and somehow his beautiful multicolored grace is on display. If we have that kind of heart that says, look, we see ourselves as ministers, we realize we're supposed to really focus

on here at home, in the body of Christ. It doesn't mean exclusively, but it means primarily we start there, and then from out of that comes our ministry to the world. And we approach it with humility. We see ourselves as waiters waiting on tables. We approach it with diligence. We keep at it. We approach it with hospitality, glad to be able to have an opportunity to meet this need. Dependence. And in faithfulness, it is something so glorious and beautiful and it looks like Jesus.

You know, I want to close by looking at John 13 because we're all supposed to see ourselves as servants and listen, we're going to see that even if you have a teaching gift, it doesn't mean that you don't serve, and even if you have a serving gift, it doesn't mean that you don't teach. Every Christian is called to do both. You are called to teach and you are called to serve, every single one. Because you're called to make disciples, it means you have to teach. Teaching everyone, you have to be a teacher. Some are more gifted to teach, but we're all called to teach. Some are more gifted to serve, but we're all called to serve. If you're a teacher, you're also still a servant and you do practical service as well. Look at the example of Jesus. Now think about this and the hospitable heart of our Savior. John 13:1, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself." I love the introduction. He lets you know all that was going on in Jesus' heart. He knows that his hour has come. The cross is standing right before him. His own need is so great. He's going to sweat drops of blood later this night in anguish thinking about being separated, as it were, from the Father's favor on the cross as he bears sin. He knows the devil has already put it in the heart of Judas. Judas is sitting there at the table to betray him. He's knowing that all things, all authority belongs to him. God's giving it back to him. The kingdom is his. Knowing all of that, the majesty that he's going to have again, he gets up from the table, lays aside his garments, and takes the form of the lowliest servant and washes their feet. Isn't that amazing? The practical need that was there, they all had now washed their feet and God in his wisdom had allowed that to happen so that Jesus would do this on the night before his crucifying. And he says after that, after he washes the feet, he says, "You call Me Teacher and Lord," verse 13, "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." Not literal foot washing. We don't need to do foot washing today with the systems we have for bathing and shoes and all of that, something much more. It means do the menial, most lowly, most difficult, sometimes even offensive to get into the lives of people and to get into the mess that sin makes can be nasty and ugly, but love requires that we do it. And the reality is we all have that kind of nasty stuff. When you get in the right spot, we see sin and love covers a multitude of sins and a hospitable heart that wants to serve, it ministers to that need. The body is built up. Things are cleaned away, washed away. We grow in grace and God is glorified. That's the calling we have as Christians and then the world sees that oneness and says, "I

don't understand. How can you be like that?" And we say, "It's Jesus. This is what God is like. Bow before Him, follow Him."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how grateful we are for the wonder of Your ways. Your incredible condescending love is so far beyond our ability to imagine that You would be like this. You are exalted above the heavens in power and majesty. You're infinite. You're omnipresent. You're perfect in holiness and righteousness, and yet You have stooped down, the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, stooped down to take on humanity and to take the form of a servant and to be obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Lord, help us to have this mind in ourselves which was also in Christ Jesus and help us to be like that because time is short. Help us to provoke one another to that. Help us to love one another fervently and serve one another faithfully. And Father, for those that are here who have not repented and believed, we pray that today would be the day of salvation, that they would stop resisting Your will and surrender to Jesus. We're so grateful that You are a gracious God, a God abounding in lovingkindness, who forgives those who repent and believe. Grant them grace, Lord. Help them run to Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*