

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 4:7-11**

43 The “End of All Things” and the Glorifying of God Through Jesus Christ, Part 2

March 3, 2019

1 Peter 4:7-11

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.

To the Glory of God

Adoniram Judson was a Missionary to Burma in the 19th Century. He labored for 37 years in a region that, even the great Missionary, William Carey, cautioned against. It was Judson's study of "Believer's Baptism" and the death of his close friend that God used to bring him out of his pagan Deism and into Salvation. But it was Judson later becoming convinced of the "Doctrines of Grace" that caused him to totally *abandon* the Congregationalist upbringing that his parents had raised him in. And from that moment on, Judson, unashamedly, heralded the absolute Sovereignty of God in Salvation to the Burmese people until his death on April 12, 1850. God also used Judson to

translate the New Testament into Burmese, and to establish one of the first Baptist Missionary Organizations.

But, in 1810, Judson was convinced that the young woman he had met, Ann (Nancy), was God's Choice to be his wife. And so, he wrote a letter to Ann's Father, asking permission to marry her and asking for his Blessing to take her, first, to India, and later to Burma. And his letter is the proposal of an avowed "Alien". It reads, in part:

"I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home, and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in a world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Savior from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?"¹

Based on this letter, Ann's father gave Judson permission to marry his precious daughter. And he also gave the 25-year old Missionary his Blessing to take his dear child into a hard life of grief, suffering, persecution, and unspeakable Joy. He never saw his daughter again. And after losing her first two children to disease, and seeing her Husband imprisoned for 17 months, Ann died, alone, as her Husband was out searching for new places to preach God's Word.

Adoniram and Ann believed the Bible. They trusted in a God they had never seen. And they believed, *especially*, the inspired Words of the Apostle Peter. And they talked about it. A lot. And, when they prayed together, they prayed that all they could do, all they could hope in, and all they could accomplish, would be:

... so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ

¹ Sharon James, *My Heart in His Hands: Ann Judson of Burma, A Life with Selections from her Memoir and Letters* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1998), pp. 33-35.

Dear friends, we must pray that God would be Good to us, to raise up from among us, those with this very same "Alien Identity" as Adoniram Judson, Ann, and her Father. We must "grab the horns of the Altar" and beg God to *cause* us to become the kind of people whose lives unmistakably prove that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe and this world is not our home.

One Missionary said that the greatest Obstacle in Missions today is what he called "*The Stumbling Block of the Pagan West*". And he asked:

"Please tell me how Americans can take the Gospel Message to a pagan people, whose family structure is more solid than our own? What could we possibly say to them about "Fathers leading their Families" when it is so rare among professed believers today? What will we teach them about Issues like "Alcoholism" and "Infanticide" and "Divorce" and "Suicide" and "Fraud" and "Lavish Waste" when these things are so common among the American Church?"²

The Answer is in what the Apostle Peter teaches us here. The Passage that Brother Vern just read to us was written almost 2,000 years ago, and yet it is very appropriate to help us overcome the many "disturbances" that troubled us just last week. God the Holy Spirit "moved along" the only man who walked on water with Jesus, to help us to, first, *possess*, and then to *maintain* an "Alien Identity" that is so critical, if we are to be God's people.

We must remember that it was the evil Emperor, Nero, that made the believers of Peters' day to be "Scattered" because of the persecution he brought on them. But it was God, *Himself*, Who made these saints to be "Aliens", in that, because of the Miracle of the New Birth, they simply did not belong; they did not "fit in" with the fallen pagan world. And so, even though we may never taste of what it means to be "Scattered", we are all *absolutely* chosen to be "Aliens". And as those who don't "fit in" by virtue of being born again, we must learn to live as "Aliens" and maintain our "Alien Identity".

Over and over again, this Apostle gives us *strange* words, words that pierce our minds, *odd* words, words that bring deep conviction to

² <https://answersingenesis.org/gospel/evangelism/evangelism-in-a-pagan-world/>

our souls, words that are *counter-intuitive* to the way 21st Century Americans normally think. But these words are *inspired* words, *infallible* words, *true* words, and words that are designed to help us to remain as "Aliens" in the world.

Now the men, who wrote Scripture were just average, ordinary men. They were all fallen sinners. But God empowered *these* men to *receive* Divine Truth, directly from God the Spirit, and to *confirm* that Truth as being "from God". And God used these men to *herald* these words, and other sinners were saved. And the world was changed.

And the words that these men *received* and *confirmed* and *proclaimed* were just average, ordinary nouns and verbs and adverbs and adjectives. They were not unusual. But God empowers *these* particular words to accomplish a very *unique* and *unusual* thing. God the Spirit takes *these* words and He *illuminates* the human mind that has been darkened by sin. *These* words articulate Absolute Truth. And God uses *these* words to bring real, genuine conviction to people God has chosen to save. And the world is changed.

And 2,000 years later, we read these words as if they were written *specifically* to us. Because God has blessed us with the ability to *believe* these words, and to *trust* in them. And God has *supernaturally* empowered us to strive to *obey* these words. Because we are gifted to understand that Obedience to *these* specially anointed words pleases God, it brings Glory to the Father, it honors the Son, and our efforts to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of these words, in our daily life, demonstrates that we, too, are Aliens, and that we really believe that Jesus is the Treasure of the Universe.

All through this Epistle, Peter tells us that we all are like a "passing shadow". He reminds believers that neither Rome nor the Middle East nor America is our home. He heralds the News that we are "Aliens" and "Exiles" here. Peter teaches that our "Regent" is *not* the Emperor or the President or the Governor or the Mayor, but a Savior, a God/Man, Who lived and died, and is alive forevermore.

Now we will never even know the names of these "Scattered Aliens" while we remain on this earth. But what they teach us, even today, is so good and so right. These men and women and boys and girls that were so horribly mistreated and suffered such injustice, at the hands of evil men, testify loudly to us today that when we can be so blessed to be that much in love with God's "world of glory", and that free

from the claims of our earthly "motherland", then we will be able, like them, to carry the glorious Gospel from our own pagan land to other pagan frontiers with some degree of credibility.

We stagger at the thought that the *main* Concern, the *main* Goal of these saints, was *not* that their "season" of persecution would end, but that they would be faithful while in it. Their prayers were *not* that God would stop the reign of evil men in Government, but that He would find them fruitful, even when it seemed that Evil was in charge. And their focus was *not* in how quickly God could deliver them from their torment, but that He would find them busy in the Work of the Lord, even when that Work was illegal.

These persecuted believers, who never knew a second of things we take for granted every day, like Democracy and Capitalism and Comfort and Security, they teach us to remember just how brief this life really is, how fleeting it is, and how ridiculous it is for people who say they believe that the entire world is "in the power of the evil one", to trust in things we can see and feel and taste and smell rather than in the one, true, invisible God. They instruct us in the dangers of becoming comfortable with *passively* "crying out" against the Darkness all around us, but not *actively* being used to bring the Light in. And they encourage us to develop the mindset of a called and chosen "Alien".

So, if we can truly reach a place where we actually cherish our "citizenship in Heaven" above all earthly allegiances, then we will be equipped to invite "non-Aliens" to join us there.

So, the Question of "*How do we keep our "Alien Identity?"*" is *not* an idle question. It is utterly important. Our Eternal Destiny hangs on it. And so, my Goal today is to stir you up to use the "Means" God has graciously given to *maintain* your "Alien Identity" in a world constantly pressing you into its mold. More specifically, I hope to motivate you to seriously focus on **1 Peter 4:7-11** where the Apostle teaches us some indispensable Strategies that will help us to maintain our "Alien Identity".

Now we need to remember that the Apostles were a non-repeatable group of men, who were *specialy* chosen and *specialy* gifted to speak to the very core of the human vessel. Paul had been caught up into the "third Heaven". God raptured John into Heaven to reveal to him the "End of all things". And besides walking on water with Jesus, Peter was one of only three men in human history that were able to

behold the Christ in the Glory that He had before the world was. So, more than any others, the Apostles were able to bridge the gap between “mysticism” and “lucid rationality”. They were all raised in “racial and ethnic purity”, but God gave them a Message that would call people from every tribe and tongue and people to Reconciliation with God and with each other. And, to a man, the Apostles suffered *unmercifully*, yet they were “always rejoicing”. So, even though what Peter teaches here may go against our carnal, 21st Century, mentality, these words are inspired. They bear the stamp of Divine Authority.

So, what did Peter say to these suffering saints? What did he tell those who were bleeding and starving and dying? What did the Apostle proclaim that would help these people maintain their “Alien Identity”? Six things:

1. Be of Sound Judgment and a Sober Spirit, for the Purpose of Prayer.
2. Keep Fervent in your Love for one another.
3. Be hospitable to one another, without complaint.
4. As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another.
5. Whoever speaks *is to do so* as one who is speaking the “Utterances of God”.
6. Whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the Strength which God supplies.

... and what I want to argue is that in each of these six cases, the strategy that Peter gives works *best* in some kind of regular *togetherness* with other believers.

1. Be of Sound Judgment and a Sober Spirit, for the Purpose of Prayer.

1 Peter 4:7

The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

The first strategy for not getting absorbed into this Age, *especially* since the “End” of this Age has already begun with the *first* Coming of the Messiah, is to be of “Sound Judgment” and a “Sober Spirit” with a view to keeping in constant communication with the King Who is back in the “Homeland” of Heaven.

And the reason Peter begins with this has to do with what I call "*The Intoxicating Power of the World*". You see, the fallen, sinful, pagan world has the ability to rob us of our "right mind". Listen to what Jesus said in **Matthew 13:22**:

... the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

Now notice, carefully, that Jesus was *not* talking about "Sin" here. He said "the *worry* of the world", *not* "the *Sin* of the world". And also notice that Jesus was *not* talking about "Wealth", or even the *accumulation* of Wealth. He was talking about the *deceitfulness* of Wealth. So, two things, the "care" or "worry" of the world that *typifies* those who don't believe, and buying into the lies and false promises that Wealth makes to us, those two things actually have the power to *choke* the inspired, infallible Word of the living God until the Word no longer has any effect on us. This is what it means to be "worldly"³.

And being "worldly" is being intoxicated with what the pagan world offers. It is looking at life in the way that lost people see it. It is making decisions as though God didn't give us the Bible. And so, by definition, being worldly is *not* being in your "right mind".

So, what does Peter say? He says:

Be of Sound Judgment and a Sober Spirit

... which, literally means, "be in your right mind" and "be sober." There is something about the "present Age" and this "present evil world" that tends to put a believer "out of his mind" and make us "spiritually drunk". I talk to people who are either drunk or high almost every week. And I have learned one thing from all of them: It is almost *impossible* to connect them with Reality. Their minds are *inebriated* with whatever substance has captivated them. And that's the way it is when a believer drinks up this world. It puts us completely "out of touch" with the Reality of *spiritual* and *eternal* matters.

And so, there is really only one thing that will empower us to be "people of Prayer", which is a person who is connected with Divine

³ For a more in- depth examination of what it means to be "Worldly" you may wish to read the Series: "*Whatever Happened to Worldliness? A Biblical Examination of Love*" from 2012.

Reality, and that is *sobering up* from the addictive, inebriating power of worldliness. If you are drunk with worldliness, and can only think of the pleasures of the world, then you will have no taste for Heaven and no desire for Prayer.

So, I ask you, what can be done for a person about to give up the sound Judgment of "spiritual mindedness", and give himself over to the stupor of worldliness? The answer is Intervention! It's what you do with an alcoholic in a deteriorating family. You gather around him and you say: *"No! You are destroying yourself and us. We see it, even if you don't, and we love you too much to let it happen. You have to seek help."*

And what is the help? Do they send the alcoholic off to the wilderness by himself for a year? No. They put him in a group. Now my point is not to say that Church is to be an "AA group". My point is simply to illustrate that we need each other if we are going to escape the intoxicating effects of the world and be "sober aliens" in a world that has gone "mad with pleasure" and oblivious and uncaring about the things of God.

So, just how may we obey verse 7 this year? What specific steps can we take, as "21st Century Aliens", to keep our minds "sound" and our hearts "sober" so that we don't gradually slide into the subtle, mental delusion that this world offers, and lose our "Alien Identity"? And may we make a Covenant with each other to watch for signs that show that some of us may be dabbling with the mind-altering pleasures of the world, so we can spot those signs and intervene?

This is exactly what the "Means of Grace" like Prayer Meetings and Bible Studies and Fellowship and the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and Service are all about. They are gracious Gifts from God that combat the creeping, intoxicating, mind-altering, deluding effects of this God-ignoring world. They are meant to be ongoing jolts of Spiritual Reality. They are repeated sessions of Divine Therapy. They are meant to be sessions where the first stages of addiction to the world can be detected and lovingly confronted and remedied with the Word of God and the Power of the Spirit. That's the strategy of verse 7 for not losing our Alien Identity.

2. Fervency of Love

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

We must understand that Aliens are not perfect. The stress of living in a foreign land can cause us to say things and do things that we regret. Things that hurt and can even destroy the precious relationship that we need so badly as Aliens. These things need to be covered and forgiven if life is to be livable together as Aliens in a hostile world. So, Peter calls us to love each other. And to let love *cover* the offense that can ruin the camaraderie that holds the alien community together.

Now it's true that we are to love our enemies. And it's also true that we are to love, in a general way, *all* the "fellow-aliens" in the world-wide Church. But here in verse 8 Peter seems to call for something very unique:

... keep fervent in your love for one another ...

This is a *special* "degree" or "kind" of Love; fervent, earnest, strong, ardent, and strongly felt. So, this is *not* simply "being nice" to people you really don't like. This is a genuine, heartfelt Affection for those you have come to trust and cherish.

Now what is interesting is that the best thing that will help build a love like this is Suffering. Historically, those who suffer together have a special bond that others simply don't have. And this is one of the secrets about *why* God allows His Own people to suffer. The number one ingredient that God desires among those who believe is love. And everything else is a distant second. Without love we are simply wasting our time. Look at what Jesus said about this in **John 13:35**:

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

The lost world will *not* know that we belong to Jesus because of our Bible knowledge. It will *not* be our ability to understand deep spiritual mysteries that will prove to the unsaved that we have been born again. It won't be that we are against Abortion or that we reject Homosexuality that will prove our spirituality. What will be the single,

unarguable sign that we are Christ's people, as far as the pagans are concerned, is the love that we have for one another. Without that, we are nothing but a "noisy gong" or a "clanging cymbal" (**1 Corinthians 13:1**).

And we are challenged with this more than most, because God has done a very *unique* thing with us. At least 1/3 of our entire Church lives out of town and some even live out of State. We are all very busy working to put food on the table, and many of us are also caring for our aged parents or others in our homes. So how can we obey verse 8? Because part of developing this "fervent love" is spending time with each other.

I really don't have any special insight here. I struggle with this as much as you do. All I can say is that since this is God's Will, He will make a way. But I will say this. Love does not become fervent and earnest through neglect and distance. Friendship and trust and affection grows with time spent together.

3. Opening Your Home Cheerfully

1 Peter 4:9

Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

Now this Strategy was very interesting to me. Because when Peter first spoke these words, most of these people he was talking to didn't even have a home to be hospitable in. But this Command is actually *ancient* and harkens back to the time when Israel was a stranger in the Land that God gave them. Since God had called them to be "holy" they had no connection to the other peoples of the world. And so, the chosen Jews had to rely on each other. And since the majority of their time was spent being subjugated by other nations, Hospitality was a hallmark of the early believers.

And even as the Gospel was first introduced, Christianity was an *illegal* and *persecuted* Religion. And so, the Call to believers to house strangers in their homes carried over into the New Covenant and became a hallmark of Biblical Christianity as well. So, Peter echoes the ancient Call for believers to be hospitable. But now look again at the last part of verse 9:

... without complaint

Now why did Peter say this? And as I pondered this, I realized something about being hospitable. There is a world of difference between having guests in your home over a particular weekend and having them live in your home for many years. Even when guests may stay for a few weeks and you are *temporarily* inconvenienced, they do eventually leave. But put that up against having to radically alter every phase of your life for an extended period of time.

And so, it isn't as much that we may not want people *at all* as it is that having them there *all the time* creates its own unique issues. The desire that all humans have to eventually "get quiet" and to "settle down" in the Evening, *especially* in our own home, may cause us to forget what being hospitable is all about, and we might be tempted to murmur or grumble.

Ultimately, Hospitality is all about Humility, a remembrance that this world is not our home and that nothing really belongs to us. All that God gives us is, at best, a *temporary* gift that can vanish as quickly as it came. Because *nothing* on this earth is permanent. And that goes for our possessions, our homes, our money, and even our lives.

So, when a brother or sister in Christ has been driven from their own homes, we are told, *repeatedly*, to open our homes and allow them to stay with us. In fact, we are also told in Scripture to allow rank strangers to stay in our homes. Part of what it means to be saved is to be Hospitable. And I can find very few exceptions to this. And this is so important that part of the Biblical Requirements to be an Elder or Deacon in the House of God is that he *must* be "Hospitable" (1 Timothy 3:2).

And so, almost 2,000 years ago, God the Spirit moved along the Apostle Peter to tell believers who are striving to maintain their "Alien Identity" to not only "**be hospitable to one another**", but to do so "**without complaint**".

4. Whoever Receives a *Special* Gift Must Employ that Gift in Serving One Another

1 Peter 4:10

As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Everything God does *for* us or gives *to* us is "by" Grace and it is "through" Faith. *Nothing* God does is designed to "make much" of us, but is designed to display the infinite Worth of Jesus. And to the degree that we are *given*, that is the degree that we are to *pour out* to others. Nothing Eternal is to be hoarded and nothing kept. "Spiritual Gluttony" is as sinful as natural gluttony. We are filled and empowered, we are illumined and enabled for only one reason, to "pour out" and to "give" and to "do" for the Glory of Jesus Christ, and to the benefit of His Church. And when we die, we should be completely *empty* and have nothing left.

And that means that as God distributes His Gifts to us, we are *never* to use those Gifts for our *own* benefit or to draw attention to ourselves. This is why special Damnation awaits those who use the Gifts of God's Grace to enrich themselves. The Bible says we are merely "stewards" of the manifold Grace of God. We don't own it; Grace does not belong to us. We have nothing to do with what Gifts God gives to us. We don't pick our Gift. God grants each one of us with certain Gifts, certain abilities, and certain talents, according to His Own Divine Prerogative. And as we are given Grace, we are to use that Grace and the Gifts that flow out from that Grace to God's Glory and the Good of God's people.

The Goal of every spiritual Gift is being the agent or the conduit or the channel or the vehicle of God's Grace to others. So, the primary Ministry of Christ's Church is brokering Grace between God and His people.

5/6. 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;

Now the last two Strategies are really just explanations of the 4th one. #4 said, "Whoever Receives a *Special* Gift Must Employ that Gift in Serving One Another," and #5&6 are telling us what that looks like.

And it deals primarily with *how* we are to “Speak” and *how* we are to “Serve”.

Those who are gifted at speaking must remember that *how* we speak is as important as *what* we say. So, it is possible that we can speak Truth, but speak it in a way that does *not* edify the hearers. Here is what the Apostle Paul taught about this subject in **Ephesians 4:15:**

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

... so, it simply isn't enough to merely “speak” or to even “speak the Truth”. We must speak the Truth “in love”. We speak the Truth with the Goal being that people will *see* and *hear* God. They will hear God speak to them through the Scriptures. And the *hearing* of the Truth will result in them *believing* the Truth, so that they will eventually come to *love* the Truth by loving the God Who gave that Truth.

And this is the main difference between “Rhetoric” and “Preaching”. This is the difference between merely “speaking to people about spiritual matters” and “heralding the Gospel”. Rhetoric relies on natural powers, mental and volitional and emotional powers, to create natural, mental, volitional, and emotional effects in people. And those effects can be absolutely stunning. And, in some ways, they can even be very “religious”.

But no matter how effective Rhetoric might be, it will *never* be the same as Christian Preaching. What makes Preaching utterly *unique* is that Preaching is, in every sense of the word, a miracle. Preaching involves an utterly unimportant and weak, sinful human being *heralding* Divine Truth. And as he does this, God the Spirit takes the spoken word, just like He did in the beginning at Creation, and produces two things in those chosen by God:

1. A spiritual “Beholding”
2. A spiritual “Savoring”

The Bible teaches that as the Word of God is preached, the veil that is over the mind and heart and eyes of the elected sinner is powerfully removed. And as the preacher continues to extol the

immutable Savior, and as God continues to “take away” the veil, the individual is blessed with the ability to “behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ”. And as that person “sees” Christ in His magnificent Beauty and Glory, he is gifted with the ability to love, to savor what he sees.

And true, genuine, Holy Spirit “Conviction” flows out from that “Beholding” and that “Savoring”. And authentic “Repentance” comes from that “Conviction”. And joyful “Obedience” flows out from that Repentance.

So, when the sinner *sees*, and then *savors* what he sees, he *immediately* comprehends the great *contrast* between himself and Jesus. The blackness of his own heart is compared with the pristine Holiness of Christ. And the result is total devastation. His Sin becomes vivid, and the Separation between himself and “*He Whom my soul loves*” overwhelms him. He is *consumed* with guilt, the *weight* of his transgressions bows him down, and *nothing* will suffice except to cry out for a Mercy that he does not deserve and a Forgiveness that he cannot earn. And once that person truly sees and savors, the Bible teaches that he will also be changed into what he sees.

Therefore, the *chief* and *ultimate* Goal of preaching is not possible apart from the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. Without His supernatural Work, the Preacher can’t articulate and the people can’t see or savor the Beauty and Worth of God in Christ. Because the unconverted mind can only see spiritual things as “foolish”. Apart from a sovereign Intervening, human beings simply don’t have the capacity to see Christ as “Precious”, because Jesus cannot be treasured by the natural mind.

But when the Spirit does His miraculous Work through the foolishness of the Word preached, He raises the spiritually dead (**Ephesians 2:5&6**). He takes out the heart of stone and puts in the soft heart of flesh (**Ezekiel 36:26**). He goes beyond what “flesh and blood” can do and reveals the Truth of Christ like He did for Peter in **Matthew 16:17**. He removes our blindness to the Glory of Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:4**). He shines “in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (**2 Corinthians 4:6**). He enlightens “the eyes of our hearts” (**Ephesians 1:18**). He unveils our face, and reveals the Beauty and Worth of Jesus, and transforms us from one degree of Glory

to another: "This comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (**2 Corinthians 3:18**).

In other words, without the sovereign, life-giving, blindness-removing, heart-illuminating, Glory-revealing Work of God's Spirit, Preaching cannot achieve its Goals, and it simply becomes a discussion about spiritual issues. Flesh can only produce more flesh. Flesh can *never* produce spiritual life. Only God the Spirit can produce "living souls".

Preaching is a Miracle in that the Preacher is seeking to be the agent of Miracles in the people. Or to put it another way: *Preaching is spiritual Worship seeking to awaken spiritual Worship*. Preaching is spiritual Seeing seeking to awaken spiritual Seeing; spiritual Treasuring in the Pulpit seeking to awaken spiritual Treasuring in the people. *That* is what Peter is teaching here.

And, then Peter gives another example of what receiving a *special* Gift from God and then employing it in serving one another as the good stewards of the manifold Grace of God looks like, when he said:

1 Peter 4:11b

... whoever serves *is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies* ...

Again, the Goal here is that as we serve, we serve to God's Glory and for the benefit of the Gospel and the people of God. And so, Peter is faithful to tell these "scattered aliens" that the one who serves, in any capacity, must keep this in mind. We are called by God, gifted by God, to serve God and God's people, to the Glory of God. And so, as we serve, we are trusting that to whatever degree God desires for me to serve, He will supply the ability and the means for that Service. And like everything else, this keeps the one who serves humble, and reminds him that he is totally dependent on God for everything.

And then Peter finally gives the one, single overriding Purpose for all of this when he said:

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

Now it is true that the people to whom Peter originally wrote this Epistle were Suffering Saints. And the strategies that Peter gives here helped them to maintain their "Alien Identity", even in a foreign land, and even though the Persecution that brought them there was long-standing. But it is also true that these Strategies will help us maintain that very same "Alien Identity", even when we are *not* suffering like these believers.

So, I pray that we will take these six things to heart this morning and begin to cry out to God for specific ways we can apply them to our own lives this year, so even though we may never become "Scattered", we will always be "Aliens".

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.