

Stewards of God's Grace

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- [0 : 00] I'm going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 73, Psalm 73, verse 23.
- Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee, thou dost me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide.
- And to thy glory afterward receive me to abide. Whom have I in the heavens high but thee, O Lord, alone? And in the earth whom I desire, besides thee there is none.
- My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never. For of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.
- For lo, they that are far from thee forever perish shall. Them that are hearing from thee go, thou hast destroyed all. But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.
- [1 : 07] In God I trust that all thy works I may declare abroad. These verses, Psalm 73, from verse 20, say, Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.
- Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee.
- And with thee, O Lord, I am with thee.
- beyond life unto the HlVoster cream He shines in heaven.
- My flesh and heart of His arm fail. But God just killed me in heaven for all my heart.
- [3 : 37] God is just then and portion forever.
- For no in our life I like, I never better be God.
- If God is Lord be God, I never dare Amen.
- O my Lord, thine name, O Lord.
- So we turn now to the passage read, 1 Peter chapter 4, and we can read from verse 7. But the end of all things is at hand.
- [5 : 21] Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.
- Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so, minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
- If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever.
- Amen. Sufferings for the Christian is the order of the day.
- Perhaps many don't like to hear that. They don't want to be made aware of it.
- [6 : 32] But if we are true to God's word, then we realise that God's word tells us that the Christian is somebody who will have to encounter suffering in the world.
- There's no getting around it.

And if we are true to God's word, then we are able to encounter it as something that comes from God's hand. The suffering comes.

But just because it does, it doesn't mean that those who have to experience it are doing so because of their unrighteousness.

It's not because they are in some way chosen by God because of their wickedness to have to go through particular sufferings.

[8 : 05] We acknowledge that God at times will chastise his own children. But that is not the sufferings that we are speaking of here.

Nor is it the sufferings that the apostle is concerned with. We are reminded frequently by each one of the apostles that just because we have to experience suffering, it doesn't mean that it's because God has stopped loving us.

Or that Christ who died for us and gave himself for us, as this passage that we read reminded us of, that he has suddenly stopped caring.

But suffering, nevertheless, would be something that the believer will go through. Some more than others.

Some at times more than other times. Some people can come in many forms. Physically, some people can be made to endure pain.

[9 : 19] Sometimes mentally, there may be torments that come our way. Very often, spiritually, we are confronted with sufferings that cannot be explained unless you've actually had to endure them yourself.

For Peter, he was writing to those who were persecuted for their faith. And the sufferings that they had to endure, he had to tell them the reason for these sufferings.

It wasn't that they didn't know what suffering was. They did. But inevitably, what comes with suffering is the endeavor to explain them in ways that are not wholesome or beneficial.

They are being persecuted for their faith. And because they are being persecuted for their faith, he wants them to be encouraged. Encouraged not to avoid the suffering, but to be able to endure it and to bear their suffering with the patience and the fortitude that grace brings along with it.

Now that's the background to the verses that we're looking at. But I want us to look very briefly on the words of this chapter, especially the section that we read last.

[10 : 55] So I'll log in these verses, but we'll just touch on some of the things that the apostle brings to mind.

He wants us to have the perspective of the believer. And that perspective that the believer possesses is not always a perspective that is powerful or strong or influential in the way that we live out our life.

What do I mean by perspective? What does he say? He says, but the end of all things there is at hand. Now, just ask yourself the question, what perspective does that give you on life?

On what you are enduring at this particular juncture in your life? Surely it influences it, affects it.

Then he says, be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer. Just a word trying to explain what is expected of the Christian in their sobriety, in their watchfulness, in their prayerfulness.

[12 : 26] Then in the next verse, above all things, he says, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Charity, we know to mean love. What kind of love are we to look for in the life?

That is the life of the believer who is enduring suffering, who is being persecuted for their faith. Where faith is, there must be evidences that accompany it.

Here he is speaking of the love of the believer. Then hospitality. One to another without grudging. Just a brief word about that word, hospitality.

Then, in verse 10, we focus on the word grace. Every man hath received a gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

[13 : 36] And then the final verse there, if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. The practical expression of grace in the life of the believer.

The channel for it, the way by which that grace is beneficially applied, not only to their lives, but to the lives of those that they interact with.

Perspective. That's all important. If you're an artist, which I'm not, the person who takes the chalk, the paintbrush or the pencil, what's important to them is they take what they see with their eyes and transpose it onto paper.

They want perspective. They want perspective. They want to see or be able to put what they see into a format that brings what they see onto the paper.

So that what a person sees on the paper is what they see on the paper. What they see with their eyes, rather. And perspective is all important.

[15 : 01] A Christian sees things with spiritual eyes. And the Christian who lives in the world allows the fact that they are Christians in the world to determine how they see the world and what is happening to them as they live in the world.

It doesn't. It isn't something that works the other way around. The Christian's perspective on events, on the present, on the future, even on the past, is determined by their Christianity.

By what feeds into that Christianity. God's word. And the fact that they understand that as Christians in this world, they are, as we read so often and hear so often said, that they are pilgrims, sojourners, tent dwellers.

This world is not to be at all or end all of their life.

Eternity beckons. They understand that. and surely it is true that whatever we do is affected by the time that we have in this world that is being eroded every day so that soon we will be translated from this world into the next that we will be moved from this world into the next we think we may have time to digest that and to think of that and that God will in his infinite wisdom prepare us for the moment and give us opportunity to reflect on what it will mean for us but Peter is saying you are somebody who is with an eye to glory already you are somebody whose understanding of this world and its temporality is fixed it is not something that you are going to allow to be distracted by the events that surround you in this world you do the main things well think of it like this if you know for certain that the time that you have is limited if you are given a certain glimpse as it were into the point at which you and this world must part then you will say to yourself surely what are the things that at most of worth that need to be done what is it that I must give myself to in the time that I have that I can't afford to let slip because the horizon that is before you has all of a sudden come to your attention and you are seeing it as if it is something that you are rapidly going towards if somebody says to you

[18 : 46] I know a person and that person is is dying and tomorrow they are going to be in eternity are you going to give yourself opportunity to go and see them or will you will you say to yourself there and then I must there is an urgent desire to especially if that person is somebody who is special to you somebody you know somebody that you want to meet before they take their leave of this world you will say to yourself I can't delay this encounter I can't delay this appointment I can't delay this meeting with this person because you know that it is an urgent thing that you don't have the liberty of time well in in some way Paul Peter is saying to the believer he is saying to them you live your life in this light you live your life knowing that this is the kind of world you inhabit and that you as a resident in this world understands the significance of what is true you know in chapter 3 these familiar words that we refer to often we read there beloved be not ignorant of this one thing that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years a thousand years as one day the Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness but is long suffering to us not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat and so on

Peter is impressed with this thought he is convinced with that thought it's a thought he wants to register in the hearts and the minds of the believer that when they consider themselves they consider those who are with them in the world and how they deal with them and how they interact with them because their time is short their time is limited their time is a time to be spent living for God for his glory for his good for his great name consider these things well have a proportionate view of the time that you have note how often prayer comes to mind prayer is central to what is done it's not to be neglected it's not to be overlooked it's not to be put to one side it's so easy for you to do all of these things many say pray many say pray about it many say to you let us do this thing a safe prayer is something that is so so vitally important and it is true that is the way it is vitally important but not sufficiently important for us not to neglect it at times not to overlook it not to think that we can manage without it we know the apostle

Peter says this is how we are to how mind should work this is how we should look at things our mind should be fixed on the reality of what prayer does and what prayer brings then there's this magnificent word charity Peter is not mealy mouthed in the way that he uses this word he is not stenting in the way that he applies this word he is saying not just to love but to love fervently to love fervently to love unfailingly and this is not meant to be an ideal for which one strives as you hold it out to the Christian believer this is what a

Christian does a Christian loves a Christian has this target to set a Christian is somebody who is loving but that is not what Peter is saying it is something that is true about the Christian someone has put it about Christian love it is never cold it is never heartless it is never without feeling Christian love is vital vital in warmth in holy passion sacrificial extravagant that word is a good word when it comes to love on the part of the Christian we lavish our loving on the Christian that we love words and deeds upon our brothers and sisters in

Christ John the apostle speaks about what is true about the love of a Christian he tells us for this reason that we are to love one another for love is of God he says everyone that loveth is born of God and know God he that loveth and not know not God for God is love here in his love not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be a prophesiation for our sins John doesn't give a typical example of love he goes to the highest point and say there is love that is the love for the Christian to exemplify and to draw from because that is the source of the Christian's love and the

[25 : 29] Christian who is loved by Christ and who is loved by God can only love those that God loves according to John and who goes and who goes and who goes further a love from Christ to his own that covers a multitude of sins there is a test of you love of my love when we are hardened by our brothers and sisters in the Lord and we call them brothers and sisters and they us and yet if they are wrong us we send for CID or we send for a lawyer and we send a letter of complaint that's not the love that the apostle is speaking about it is a love that is capable of hiding a multitude of sins not just one extreme sin but a multitude of sins you've heard often quoted at a question day where the love of the believer is used as an example how two brothers in the

Lord were so closely proud to one another that they drew the attention of those who were in the village with them especially the village children the village young people who decided to test their love you know the story but it's worth telling one of them had killed a wedder and it was hanging in the byre or in the shed and the children decided we'll test how affectionate they are to one another how loving they are to one another so they took the wedder from one barn and put it into the barn of the other man and they feigned interest in the situation and they said we'll look for it with you we'll find the culprit we'll bring bring to light the thief and they directed the man who lost the wedder to the barn of the other man where they had secretly placed the wedder that they had taken and they pointed him out as the culprit and his reply to them was forget it let it not go past here but will say no more about it this was his brother and whatever his brother had done and it wasn't a small thing he was willing to overlook because he loved his brother that is the love that Peter is encouraging in the life of the believer hospitality second nature to many of us but

Covid has made us fearful Covid has rightly made us careful perhaps with good reason but we need to recover that good thing that we have lost there is a debate going in church circles and always reason for debate always reason for considering how things are and how things could be better and many are asking questions well many things were lost because of Covid many things had to be put on the back burner many things had to be left to one side is it not a good time for us to think about these things that were lost if they're worth recovering if they're worth restoring if they're worth getting back maybe now's the opportune moment for leaving these things that were so much part of our life and well really now in this modern generation we have no need for them well maybe there's sound reasoning behind these arguments and these considerations but there are things that you cannot give up there are things that the Lord has given to his people there are things that the church of Christ were known for for their generous hospitality for their generous spirit one to the other and to others who were no friends of Christ you know the government of the day is no friend of the gospel it's no friend of the gospel you know that and

I know that but where would this government of the day be were it not for the Christian charitable disposition of the church of Christ for the spirit of hospitality for the spirit of love that permeates the atmosphere the Christian breathes that wants them to do good for others and will stretch themselves financially stretch themselves physically stretch themselves in all kinds of way in order to do for others what no other organisation is being allowed to do or wanting to do the Christian graces that the apostle is highlighting here are graces that we dare not let slip not only should we cultivate and we should jealously guard them we should do everything in our power to ensure that they are part and partial of my

Christianity and your Christianity grace the very thing you need may come your way from an unlikely source sometimes God uses means that surprises you know this is what the apostle is saying surely as every man hath received the gift even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God it doesn't say what the gift is unless he's referring back to the gift of hospitality and if he's referring back to the gift of hospitality he is saying if you have the opportunity make sure you use the opportunity if you have a door make sure it's an open door if you have a home make sure that home is a home for the

[33 : 13] Lord's people or for any other who may be an angel that you're entertaining and aware it's your opportunity God has given you endowed you with graces not just the grace of hospitality but others as well that accompany it as every man hath received the gift even so minister the same one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God in other words what is he alluding to what is he directing you to oh he's reminding you of the fact that you have nothing except what God has given to you what you have you have alone of the best of what you have you're not going to hold and if God has given to you he has given it to you as a steward of his resources look at the parable that

Jesus taught his disciples with the talents the parable of the talents what was he doing he was reminding the disciples reminding us of the need that we have to use our resources to the best of our ability to the glory of God to the glory of Christ Jesus God God he has to the glory he has to the glory of God if any man minister let him do it as of the ability which God giveth that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever or how many of you will hold up your hand and say I have no gift I have no grace I have nothing that's worth telling anybody about or sharing somebody sharing with somebody nothing worth talking about has

God left you without something that you can use for him in his cause for his great name has he deprived you of all the gifts and graces that this world has that the world uses you'll find there are people in this world and you would say about them well they don't have much to celebrate they don't have much to speak about and yet you'll find that a great many of them are willing to do the best they can for themselves perhaps for others it shouldn't be like that for the Christian you have but a servant of a master who is a good master and he will never leave those who serve him without the resources to apply themselves to the best of their ability and for the glory of his name to whom is the praise

Jesus Christ he is the one who will receive the glory he is the one whose name is going to be a name that will last throughout all ages you intend to go to heaven and you intend to do something that many people in this world are longing to do what are you going to do when you get there oh well you'll take your crown because as a believer you'll be crowned you'll be given the victor's crown and you'll get into glory and you'll see your saviour and what do you do you'll throw your crown at his feet and you won't say that day oh it's not much of a crown it's a crown that he has given and he's polished it and burnished it and he says it fits it fits you and he because

I knew I knew who you were I knew what kind of person you were I knew what gifts you had whether a gift of song or a gift of poetry or a gift of giving or a gift of patiently sitting talking to people who wanted to talk about their walls a list is endless don't despise the gifts that God has endowed you with but seek avenues to explore them further and to use them mightily in his name not for the sake of the crown but the sake of the giver may God encourage us with these few simple thoughts and a passage that's full of so much meaning let us pray gracious God you are our saviour you are a redeemer you are the one who bestows so many gifts upon us in our lives even things that we do not imagine to be worthy to bear the name of a gift and yet from your hand as recipients we are unworthy of the least of your mercies so bless us each one encourage us to turn to your word and to take that word and to apply it to our lives in the ways that you want us to and to live out our lives to your glory hear our prayers pardon our sins in Jesus name amen closing psalm psalm 42 we're singing last two verses of the psalm in gaelic psalm 42 to o mann can do even know to him for another return to 11 bod ootibh braach oh manin chum ala gu■■■■ mesinis

[40 : 25] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[42 : 55] Thank you.

Thank you.