

## 1 Peter 4:7-11

1Pe 4:7 (NKJV) **But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.** <sup>8</sup> **And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."** <sup>9</sup> **Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.** <sup>10</sup> **As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** <sup>11</sup> **If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

Beginning in v10, Peter says that each believer “**has received a gift**”, a spiritual gift of some nature. The word “**gift**” is the Greek word “*charisma*” and specifically refers to a divine spiritual endowment that a believer receives from the Holy Spirit. The suffix “*ma*” indicates that the gift is the result of God’s grace and is an undeserved benefit in the believer’s life.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Vine says that it is “*gift of grace, a gift involving grace on the part of God as the donor*”.<sup>2</sup> The root word for “*charisma*” is the Greek word “*char*” which means “**joy**”. The Greek word “*charis*” is the word for “**grace**”. Think of grace as God giving to you both the desire and the power to do His will. One of the great personal benefits of using our spiritual gifts wisely and properly is that when we do so, it will bring joy into our life. It is one of God’s ways of creating a high level of fulfillment in the believer’s life because when he uses his gift properly, he knows that he is being used by God.

Now, at this point it is important to recognize that not everyone has the same gifts, and sometimes that can create some tension in the body of Christ. Let us assume that you have the gift of mercy. What will happen is that you will recognize a situation where mercy needs to be exercised, but the Christians that you are involved with are not exercising any mercy in that circumstance – and it may very well frustrate you so that you actually say something unnecessary to someone. So, it is important to understand that not everyone has yet matured in a supernatural gifting that we may have. In that circumstance, we are simply called on by God to be an example to others of how mercy operates, but without demanding it from them. Just to explain this a little further, look at seven spiritual gifts listed in [Romans 12:6-8](#),

Ro 12:6 (NKJV) **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup> or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.**

Let us assume that we are at someone’s house having supper one evening and someone accidentally drops the dessert tray on the floor and all seven of these specific gifts are represented at the table. The following is a very legitimate scenario of how each one of them would react to the dessert being dropped on the floor.

- The person with the gift of prophecy might say “That’s what happens when you’re not careful”.
- The person with the gift of serving might say “No problem. I will clean this up.”

<sup>1</sup> Zodhiates, 1471.

<sup>2</sup> Vine, *charisma*, ep.

- The person with the gift of teaching might say “The reason that happened is because the tray was too heavy and too awkward for the person carrying the tray.”
- The person with the gift of exhortation might say “Next time, it might be best if we actually serve the dessert at the table.”
- The person with the gift of giving might say “I will be more than happy to pay for everything that was broken.”
- The person with the gift of leading might say “Gary, you get the mop, Larry you help pick the things off the floor, and Ruby, you come help me fix some more dessert.”
- Finally, the person with the gift of mercy might say “Don’t feel bad about this. It could have happened to anyone of us.”

The point is that our spiritual gift(s) are supernatural endowments that cause us to see life from different perspectives and with different emphases, and sometimes those perspectives are very different from the person sitting beside us. Some people are absolutely black and white and objective about everything, and other people are very gray and subjective about everything. We are all different, and that is a very good thing. So, it is wrong for us to try and make someone always see life from our perspective. We all have different gifts, different temperaments, different personalities, different skills, and different aptitudes that make us very different from each other. Rather than always criticizing the differences that someone has who may be irritating us, it would be much better to accept that person the way that God has made them and along the way become an encouragement to them in the areas of their life that need improvements – which is true for all of us.

Remember the principle that we have taught for many years that when we become very irritated with someone that it only reflects that we do not have a quality that God wants us to have. We may actually be right and will probably feel justified in our frustration, but that may only cause us to miss the very thing that God is wanting to do in us, to miss the changes that He wants to make in our life. We must see an irritation with someone as a reflection that we simply do not have a spiritual quality that God wants us to develop and mature in our life. We must see God’s work in our life from His perspective and not our own. It is a place of great spiritual liberty and freedom when we can see how God is using other people in our life that frustrate and annoy us. It generally reveals our lack of patience, or our lack of wisdom, or our lack of mercy, or our lack of understanding relative to our own spiritual maturity. Our tendency is to always be trying to change someone else when most likely God is trying to change us through them and through their shortcomings.

This can always be a problem in a marriage where the idea of “opposites attract” – which is very true. The problem is that once you marry someone who has the opposite qualities that you may have and actually admired before marriage, those differences eventually become great sources of irritation and frustration in the marriage. When I first met my wife she was (and still is thank goodness) a neat freak, a clean freak. I thought “Hey this is great”. I thought that because I was anything but a neat freak. Once we got married, my admiration turned to outright despair and frustration because now she would have nothing to do with my lack of neatness”. She had a place for everything – I mean everything (and she still does). Third door, second shelf, on the right below the potato chips. She even has the right way that towels, underwear, and sheets are folded. I always thought that you just wadded them up and threw them in a pile in the corner of your room or casually stuffed them in your chest of drawers. It had always

worked for me. Today, however, I am also a neat freak. I love what my wife has taught me and the influence her life has had on mine. Initially, it was a grievous irritation, but today it is the exact opposite – a cherished quality in her that has helped me to mature in that area. I must admit that my study is often a mess. I just do not have enough room for everything, but every so often I just have to clean it up, and actually enjoy doing it.

Listen carefully. Everyone in your life will have qualities that you would change if you could but you cannot – and especially those to whom you may be the closest. Do not try to change them. Why? It is because you will mess everything up and make it worse. This is why people often get divorces. One partner is always trying to change the other partner to be like them – AND THAT IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY! They are uniquely different than you. If you could make them to be like you, in the final analysis you would be greatly disappointed. Only God can change someone, and He knows the things to change and how to change them. I have no power to change someone's personality, their temperament, their inclinations, or their personal history. Only God can change someone. Never forget that.

What that should do is to create in you both a heart and a mindset to allow God to change you through their shortcomings, to develop in you a deeper level of trust of God's work both in you and in them as well. Here is what will happen. As you allow God to mature you and to adjust your shortcomings when someone who is irritating and frustrating you brings that out of you, your personal growth and maturity will eventually become God's amazing spiritual example for that other person to change. It is very, very difficult to constantly deny the reality of God's work in someone else's life without it impacting your personal life. Just let God change you through your trials and you will begin to see God change someone else in that process. Never be over-demanding of the person that you simply cannot change. Learn how to defer, learn how to walk away without showing frustration, learn how to love when something unlovable is happening to you, learn how to be patient when you want to be impatient, learn how to control your tongue when you want to just cut through someone with your words, and learn how to respond rather than reacting to what someone says or does. Right now, you already intuitively know that those are the right and godly things to do – even if you may choose to act differently. If you do not understand these spiritual realities, then you simply have no right to always be criticizing the one who frustrates and irritates you. We read the following in [Philippians 2:14](#) in the last study which says,

**Php 2:14 (NKJV) Do all things without complaining and disputing,**

For some reason our tendency is to think that this applies to everyone else but us personally, and that for whatever reason that we are exempt from its spiritual reality and demands on our personal life. That is an absolute misunderstanding of Scripture and will lead to nothing but greater heartache and frustration in your relationship with other people, and especially those with whom you are the closest. At a personal level, and I hope this does not sound arrogant, but I do not feel threatened by anyone or how they may choose to treat me or relate to me. They can hate me, ignore me, criticize me, and plot against me personally. I do not feel threatened by any of those things. I want to be as much like Christ when He hung on the cross and prayed that the Father would actually forgive those who were crucifying Him. He said “**They know not what they are doing**”. That is exactly where God is leading us – to be as much like Christ as is practically possible.

So,, the point is that God is always using other people in our life to motivate us to a deeper level of spiritual maturity, but we are so prone to not being willing to recognize what He is doing. I know that we do not always like it or even appreciate it, but God is constantly allowing people to get under our skin, to irritate us, to exasperate us, to annoy us, and to even infuriate us at times. Whenever that happens, our tendency is to greatly criticize the other person, when in reality God may very well have brought them into our life to change us, to arouse and motivate us personally to a greater level of spirituality. I would say that that is His greater purpose, but for us, the person that God has divinely appointed to frustrate us and irritate us is seen as a hindrance, as someone that we do not like, and as someone that we actually want out of our life. The result? Simple. We miss God's greater work in us – which is always His purpose for our life.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Vine, W.E. *The Expanded Vine's: Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. A Special Edition. Edited by John R. Kohlenberger III. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1984.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.