

Session 3

September 16, 2018

GRACIOUS HOSPITALITY

1 Peter 4:7-11

One of the most important goals of the Christian life is *consistency*; that ability to live life calmly and confidently as it comes, regardless of the circumstances. First Peter was written to encourage Christ-followers who were suffering persecution to live exemplary Christian lives regardless of the difficulties. As he begins to end his letter, Peter emphasizes several characteristics of the Christian life that, when intentionally put into place, bring consistency to the believer's life and glory to his God.

Prayer (v. 7). The Lord Jesus spoke of *persistent* praying (Luke 11:5ff). James, the brother of our Lord spoke of *intentional* praying (James 4:2-3). The apostle Paul summed up the *priority* of praying (1 Thess. 5:17). Here, Peter encourages *intensity* in praying. The "end of all things is near" has several possible applications. In the context of suffering, the temporary nature of human life is one possibility, as is the soon-to-be-felt siege of Jerusalem that would end that chapter of the Jewish experience. In any case, change was in the air; time was running out and Peter urged the believers to be serious (the old English translations say "sober" or "temperate") and disciplined (or "watchful"). The key idea is that the serious times require a seriousness to prayer.

Love (v. 8). It's not that love is more important than prayer per se, but rather love is more of an overarching attribute. Love is not only the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36ff), but it is the distinguishing mark of the believer (John 13:35), and the church's bond of unity (Col. 3:14). The believers Peter addresses already have it. The encouragement here is to maintain it in even more fervency. The reason? Love enables us to overlook a multitude of offenses against us (see Prov. 10:12).

Hospitality (v. 9). "Being hospitable" is the better translation. Hospitality is more than hosting in this case. It is "taking one another in," or providing for one another in the broadest sense. The context here links it to love; hence, the first indication of fervent love for one another is taking care of one another. Like every other Christian activity, attitude counts! (see Col. 3:12ff) So Peter reminds them that showing hospitality is an act of love and should be done without any grumbling.

Stewardship (v. 10). With the context being the church, the giftedness Peter speaks of is likely the spiritual gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the body (see 1 Cor. 12:4-11). But the meaning may well be broader. On this verse, John Wesley's contemporary Joseph Benson said it well: whether "spiritual or temporal, ordinary or extraordinary," believers are to "employ that gift for the common good." Consistent believers are constant and careful stewards of all that God has passed to them.

Godly speech (v. 11a). The speaking here is proclamation of God's word. The emphasis, however, is on the source of that word; hence, those who preach must proclaim the "oracles of God;" *His* utterances, *His* teachings. Preaching is not the time for personal opinion or self-

promotion. Like John the Baptist, the mature and consistent believer is careful to decrease, so that Christ might increase (John 3:30).

Service (v. 11b.) The early commentators treated this “service” specifically as giving to the poor, but there is no reason to limit it as such. Service to others is ministry in its simplest form. Again, the context indicates that this ministry is a demonstration of the love mentioned in verse 8. Moreover, the Bible teaches that when any service is performed, it should be in Christ’s name, with thanksgiving (Col. 3:17), by His strength, and for His glory.