

1 Peter 4:11

“If any man speak ...”

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In 1 Peter 4:11, the apostle says: "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 for ever and ever. Amen."

God's people have long recognized the seriousness of Peter's injunction. Anytime we speak at all on religious matters we should speak as "holy men of God spake" (2 Peter 1:20-21). We say the things they said; then and only then are we speaking as the oracles of God. We must emphasize what they emphasized. As Paul told Titus: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Perhaps the need to speak as the "oracles of God" has particular application to preachers of the gospel. As William Barclay suggests: "If a man has the duty of preaching, let him preach not as one offering his own opinions or propagating his own prejudices, but as one with a message from God" (The Letters of James and Peter, pp. 256, 257). Before we speak to men, we must listen to God. Preaching must be done, not to display the preacher but to bring men to God. Paul's boasting was of the Lord and in the preaching of the word, and only that (2 Corinthians 10). Only good can result when we do all things for the glory of God and not for ourselves. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

In the immediate context of 1 Peter 4:7-11, Peter writes to Christians who were suffering severe persecution. The "fiery trial" was upon them and they became "partakers of Christ's sufferings." In the midst of these trying circumstances, Peter admonishes God's people to unite upon common ground. Their attitudes toward the return of Jesus Christ, love for each other, hospitality, and being good stewards, would fortify them in the midst of a world that was openly hostile to the demands of dedication set forth in the oracles of God!

Christians must live with eternity's values in view. In fact, our time here on earth makes sense only in view of eternity. Each day must be lived in eager anticipation of Christ's return. Yes, we "watch unto prayer" and say, "Lord, hasten the day of thy return." It has been said that we live in the land of the living. Not so! We live in the land of the dying, but we are on our way to the land of the living!

Too, love must exist among God's people. Jesus tells us that love is our badge of discipleship. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). This badge must be worn at all times. Our love for one another must be genuine. Love is the tie that binds God's family together.

Hospitality extended to all, but especially to fellow Christians, would naturally draw people together in times of trouble. Are the times in which we live any less dangerous to our faith and purity? We need to spend time with God's people. Our children need to be around other Christians. We must cultivate friendships within the family of God. We need the encouragement of those of like precious faith.

We must also be good stewards before God. Whether Peter refers to some miraculous gift, or a man's natural endowments, the principle is the same. We must be good stewards, taking care of, and using wisely all that comes from God.

The underlying emphasis in all that Peter says, is that every facet of our lives must conform to the "oracles of God." Whether we speak of love, hospitality, etc., we must constantly be reminded of what God says! We must speak only as He has spoken to us. As we combine preaching with practical service in the kingdom of God, may we unite together in doing the will of God as He has commanded. May we be "stirred up" by "remembering" the sacred oracles as we endeavor to do just those things that will glorify and honor the God of heaven!

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