

## A Study of The Epistle of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter

### Theme: "A LIVING HOPE!"

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Lesson: 31

Chapter 4:8-11

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#### **BIBLE TEXT:**

(8) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (9) Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. (10) As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of **God's varied grace**: (11) whoever speaks, as one who speaks **oracles of God**; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that **God supplies**--in order that in everything **God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

#### **STUDY NOTES:**

(8) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.  
(Prov 10:12; Mt 18:21,22; 1 Cor 13:5,6; Eph 4:32; 1 Th 4:9-10; Jas 5:20; 1 Jn 4:7-11)

(9) Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.  
(Gen 18:4; Rom 12:13; 1 Tim 3:2; 5:10; Titus 1:7,8; Heb 13:2; 3 Jn 5-8)

(10) As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of **God's varied grace**:  
(Mt 25:15; Lk 12:42; Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 4:1-7; 12:7-11)

(11) whoever speaks, as one who speaks **oracles of God**; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that **God supplies**--in order that in everything **God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**  
(Ac 7:38; Rom 3:2; 12:3; 1 Cor 1:26-31; 10:31; 2 Cor 2:17; Heb 5:12; Jude 24,25)

#### **Luther's Works –Vol. 30**

##### **8. Above all, hold unflinching your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.**

“Here you see why we should be “sane and sober,” namely, that we may be fit for prayer both for ourselves and for our neighbor. Furthermore, love cannot be fervent unless you hold the body in check, so that you have room for love.

Here St. Peter has taken a verse from the Book of Proverbs, where we read in chapter 10:12: “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.” And this is what St. Peter means: Curb your flesh and lust. If you do not do this, you will easily become angry with one another, and it will not be easy for you to forgive one another. Therefore see to it that you subdue the evil lust. Then you will be able to love and forgive one another, for love covers sin.

According to the interpretation of some, this verse militates against faith. Therefore they say: “You declare that faith alone makes one pious and that no one can be freed from sin through works. Then why do Solomon and St. Peter say that love covers sin?”<sup>2</sup> You must reply: “Solomon says that he who hates another person is unceasingly eager for strife and quarreling. But where there is love, it covers sin and is glad to forgive. Where there is anger, you will find a rude person who refuses to be reconciled and remains full of anger and hatred. On the other hand, a person who is full of love cannot be angered, no matter how greatly he is offended. He covers everything and pretends not to see it, so that this covering is meant with reference to the neighbor, not with reference to **God**. Only faith shall cover your sin before **God**. But my love covers my neighbor's sin, and just as **God** covers my sin with His love if I believe, so I must also cover my neighbor's sin.

Therefore the apostle says that you should love one another in order that one person may be able to cover the other person's sin. And love does not cover one, two, or three sins. No, it covers the multitude of sins. It cannot suffer and do too much; it covers everything. Thus in 1 Cor. 13:7 St. Paul also says, and, as it were, interprets this text: ‘Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.’ It wants the very best for everybody. It can suffer and forgive everything that is inflicted on it.” St. Peter goes on:

##### **9. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another.**

##### **10. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another.**

The person who is glad to provide lodging is called hospitable. Thus when the apostles went jointly in the country to preach, and when they sent their disciples to and fro, then one person had to provide lodging for the other person. This is how it should still be. One should travel from one place to another to preach, from city to city, from house to house; and

one should not tarry too long at one place. One should be able to see: if a person is weak, he should get help; if a person has fallen, he should be encouraged, and the like. This, says St. Peter, should be done ungrudgingly, and no one should let this be too much.

Now this is also a work of love, as is also the injunction that follows, namely, that we should serve one another. With what? With **the gifts of God** which everyone has received. **The Gospel** wants everyone to be the other person's servant and, in addition, to see that he remains in the gift which he has received, which **God** has given him, that is, in the position to which he has been called. **God** does not want a master to serve his servant, the maid to be a lady, a prince to serve the beggar. For He does not want to destroy the government.

But the apostle means that one person should serve the other person spiritually from the heart. Even if you are in a high position and a great lord, yet you should employ your power for the purpose of serving your neighbor with it. Thus everyone should regard himself as a servant. Then the master can surely remain a master and yet not consider himself better than the servant. Thus he would also be glad to be a servant if this were **God's will**. The same thing applies to other stations in life.

*As good stewards of God's varied grace.*

**God** did not give us all equal grace. Therefore everyone should pay attention to his qualifications, to the kind of gift given to him. When he is aware of this, he should use his gift in the service of his neighbor, as St. Peter explains further, saying:

*11. Whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God.*

That is, if someone has the grace to be able to preach and teach, let him teach and preach. Thus St. Paul also says in Rom. 12:3–6: "I bid everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which **God** has assigned him.

For as in one body we have members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are **one body in Christ**, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them." He continues: "If prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching" (v. 7). He teaches the same thing in other places—in 1 Corinthians (12:12) and in Ephesians (4:7).

Accordingly, **God has poured out varied gifts among the people**. They should be directed to only one end, namely, that one person should serve the other person with them, especially those who are in authority, whether with preaching or with another office. Now St. Peter says here: "Whoever speaks, as one who utters **oracles of God**." One should note very well that no one should preach anything unless he is sure that it is **God's Word**. Here St. Peter has stopped the mouth of the pope. And lo, the pope wants to be St. Peter's successor! How beautifully he lives up to that obligation! The apostle continues:

*Whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies.*

That is, he who rules in **the Christian Church** and has an office or a duty to care for souls should not proceed as he pleases and say: "I am an overlord here. I must be obeyed. What I command must be carried out." **God** wants us to do nothing except what He assigns. It must be **God's work and arrangement**. Therefore a bishop should do nothing unless he is sure that **God is doing it, that it is God's Word or work**.

For **God** does not want us to regard what He does with **the Christian Church** as jugglery. Therefore we must be so sure that **God is speaking and working** in us that our faith can declare: "What I have said and done, this **God has done** and said. I stake my life on this." Otherwise, if I am not sure of this, my faith is founded on sand. Then the devil will take me. Thus here it is earnestly forbidden to take orders from any bishop unless he is **certain that God is doing what he does and he can say: "Here I have God's Word and command."**

Where this is not the case, he must be regarded as a liar. For **God** has ordained that our conscience must rest on solid rock. This pertains to the general rule. Here no one should follow his own opinion and do something concerning which he is not sure that **God wants it**. From this you see that long ago St. Peter toppled the rule of the pope and the bishops as it is today. The apostle goes on:

*In order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.  
To Him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

This, the apostle says, is why you should be so sure that **God is saying and doing** what you are saying and doing; for if you do a work concerning which you are not certain that **God has done it**, you cannot praise and thank Him. But if you are sure of this, you can thank and laud Him for the sake of His Word and work. Otherwise you deny Him and regard Him as a juggler. Therefore it is both shameful and harmful to desire to rule in **Christendom without God's Word and work**. Consequently, St. Peter was constrained to add these words in order to give instruction regarding what the nature of the rule in **Christendom** should be."

**LIFE APPLICATION**

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins."  
How does this work out in everyday life?