

Subject: *How to Live the Christian Life*

Scripture: *1 Peter 4:1-11*

Notice the repeated phrase “in the flesh” (vs. 1, 2). This refers to Christ’s life on earth and our life on earth. The Book of James says it is like a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. What are we going to do with our dash? How should we live the rest of our time on earth?

We divide human history into B.C. and A.D., before Christ, and in the year of our Lord. A Christian’s life can be divided with the same letters: B.C. (before conversion) and A.D. (after death). The question is how will we live between the B.C. and the A.D.?

The Bible describes our life as a pilgrimage or a journey.

1 Peter 1:17 ...pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

First Peter also reminds that we can expect to encounter suffering and persecution along the way. This passage reveals the purifying purpose of suffering. God is more concerned with our holiness than our happiness. That’s why He allows us to suffer trials and persecution in the world. The goal of the Christian life is not to freedom from suffering, but freedom from sin.

God’s purpose in salvation is not only to deliver us from judgment and eternal punishment in hell, but to make us like His Son Jesus. Early in the New Testament, God revealed the saving purpose of Christ’s ministry when the angel appeared to Joseph to announce the virgin birth: ***Matthew 1:21*** And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. To “save his people from their sins” means save them from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the practice of sin. When Christ comes again or calls us home, He will save us from the presence and possibility of sin. Jesus came to save us from the bondage of sin. He came to make us new and to change our lives completely.

Four reasons why salvation is life-changing:

- **The new birth is life-changing** – ***2 Corinthians 5:17*** Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
- **God’s Word is life-changing** – ***Psalms 19:7*** The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.
- **The Holy Spirit is life-changing** – ***Galatians 5:16*** This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.
- **Suffering for Christ is life-changing** – ***1 Peter 4:1*** Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.

This verse is not talking about sinless perfection. It means suffering as a Christian breaks the patterns of sin because Christ has saved us from the power (dominion) of sin.

1. Be prepared to suffer (vs. 1) – “arm yourselves” is battle language. We are in a spiritual battle and the stakes couldn’t be higher. *1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith*
2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

2. Make a clean break with sin (vs. 2-3) – In the past we lived in sin like the rest of the world. *Ephesians 2:2-3* ² *Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:* ³ *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

Like the people that Peter is writing to, our past life may have included lasciviousness (lewdness, unbridled, unrestrained sin), lusts (sinful desires), drunkenness, revellings (parties), banqueting (gluttony), and abominable idolatries (acts of worshiping false gods) that involved the worst kind of immorality. Though we may have done these things before our salvation, we must repent and make a clean break from sin. John MacArthur said, “Sin in the believer is a burden which afflicts him rather than a pleasure which delights him.” Adrian Rogers used to say: “Before we are saved we leap into sin and love it, but after we’re saved, we lapse into sin and hate it.”

3. Expect unbelievers to resent you (vs. 4) – The world doesn’t appreciate a Christian who is living a new life and has turned from old habits. Former friends are surprised and even offended and resentful because of our changed lifestyle. The phrase “excess of riot” means a state of sin in which a person thinks about nothing else. There is the feeling of rejection and there is also the testimony of righteousness that makes them feel uncomfortable. This is what Jesus meant in *John 3:19-20* ¹⁹ *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* ²⁰ *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*

4. Remember the coming judgment (vs. 5-7) – We need to remember that all men will give an account to Him. The world may resent us and reject us, and even persecute us, but the Judge will have the last word. *Romans 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* All Christians will be evaluated and rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ. All unbelievers will be judged and condemned at the Great White Throne Judgment. Verse 6 refers to all who had heard and accepted the Gospel of Christ when they were still alive, but who had died by the time Peter wrote this letter. They were dead physically, but they were alive in spirit and now in the Lord’s presence.

5. Be serious-minded (vs. 7) – In verse 7, “the end of all things” doesn’t refer to the end of the world or the end of time. This word means the goal or consummation, that is, something that is achieved. The goal or consummation of all things in this life is soon going to be achieved (“at hand” means imminent). In the day we meet the Lord in judgment we want to be able to say, “I’m glad I lived for Christ,” instead of saying, “I wish I had lived for Christ.” The word “sober” means “serious.” We need to be “sober-minded, serious-minded.” We need to be awake and have our spiritual eyes open. *Romans 13:11 And that, knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*

6. Be prayerful (vs. 7) – When we think clearly and see ourselves as pilgrims on our way to meet the Lord in heaven, we will pray more and pray better. We need to be diligent and alert in prayer. If we don't pray as we should, we will faint (lose heart) or worry (be anxious).

Philippians 4:6-7 Be careful (anxious) for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

7. Love and forgive others (vs. 8) – This is talking about love for our brothers and sisters in Christ (“have fervent charity among yourselves”). The word “fervent” means stretched out to maximum effort, like a runner stretching out for the finish line. In other words, give your best effort in loving one another. Love covers a multitude of sins (a quote from Prov. 10:12). This is talking about the sins of others. This doesn't eliminate the need for church discipline because our love for Christ and our love for His Word and His church must come above and beyond all other love. To “have fervent love among yourselves” means we cover the shame and exposure of our brothers and sisters when they sin. We don't flaunt their sins and parade them before others. We keep what we know to ourselves and we pray for them.

8. Care for the needs of others (vs. 9) – The word “hospitality” sounds to us like entertaining someone for dinner, but it is actually related to the word “hospital.” The word literally means “love for strangers.” Hospitality means ministering to someone in need, even someone who may be a complete stranger. In Bible times it meant opening their home to people who were traveling in ministry or running from persecution. Hospitality was not a matter of proper etiquette, but a matter of life and death. *Hebrews 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

9. Use spiritual gifts to serve others (vs. 10-11) – Notice the possession of these gifts. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift or combination of gifts. Notice the nature of these gifts. A spiritual gift is a God-given desire and ability to serve others in the context of the local church. A spiritual gift can't be worked up or earned. It can only be received because it is a gift of God's grace (Gk. *charisma*). Then notice the accountability for these gifts. We are stewards of these grace gifts. God has entrusted them to us for a time. Then we see the variety of these gifts. The word “manifold” means many-colored or many faceted (cp. 1:6, “manifold temptations”). Just as there are many kinds of service needed, there is always a corresponding grace-gift that enables us to minister to one another. Verse 11 refers to the two basic kinds of gifts, speaking gifts and service gifts. These gifts are mentioned in more detail in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. If any person speaks as a preacher or teacher, let him be God's mouthpiece, speaking the Word of God and not his own ideas. If any person is ministering in service, let him do it with the ability God gives. Last of all, notice the goal of the spiritual gifts, God's glory. In all things God will be glorified and the needs of people will be satisfied. This is how to live the Christian life:

1. Be prepared to suffer
2. Make a clean break with sin
3. Expect unbelievers to resent you
4. Remember the coming judgment
5. Be serious-minded
6. Be prayerful
7. Love and forgive others
8. Care for the needs of others
9. Use spiritual gifts to serve others

Only one life; it will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.