



Living the New Life

1 Peter 4:1-11



The Way to New Life

- ❑ At the beginning of his letter, Peter says that God has given believers “new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1:3, NIV). Believers are “born again” into a new life made possible through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - 📖 “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.” (1 Peter 3:18, NIV)

Breaking Away from the Old Life

- ❑ Reflecting on Christ’s suffering, Peter applies it to the believer’s life. Read 1 Peter 4:1-6.
- ❑ Christ-followers should have the same attitude as Christ, who chose to suffer for doing good in accordance with God’s will (3:17).¹ In what way is the sufferer “done with sin”? (4:1)
 - *One answer:* “...just as Christ suffered...so too believers should resolve to suffer, for the decision to suffer indicates that they have ceased to let sin have dominion over them.”²
- ❑ In other words, these believers have committed to break away from the old life – that is, “doing what pagans³ choose to do” (4:3)⁴ – even if breaking away means suffering.
 1. In general, how would you describe the behavior of the old life? What motivates this behavior? (4:2-4)⁵
- ❑ When we become Christ-followers, we break away from the old life, and we live a new life – a life committed to the will of God (4:2).
 2. When we break away from the old life, how might we be treated by those who are not Christ-followers? (4:4) Why do they treat us this way?⁶

¹ Peter earlier said, ‘...if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.’ (2:20-21)

² Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2003), 198. Another view is stated by Clowney: “When Christ died to sin in our place, we died to sin... Our decisive ‘suffering in the body’ is that death which we share with Christ who suffered in the body for us” (Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988], 170). See Romans 6:8-12. However, Schreiner’s view of 1 Peter 4:1 is more common among modern scholars. This does not mean that suffering believers are totally free from sin in this life (1 John 1:8; James 3:2) but their willingness to suffer for doing good demonstrates their commitment to God’s will.

³ The Greek word *ethnōn* is translated ‘pagans’ by the NIV and ‘Gentiles’ by the ESV. ‘Gentiles’ is a more literal translation, but the term typically refers to non-Jewish people. In this context, however, Peter meant people outside the Christian faith (that is, unbelievers) who had different values and lifestyles. While not all unbelievers necessarily engaged in the activities listed in verse 3, such behavior represented the un-Christian life in Greco-Roman society.

⁴ ‘debauchery’ – unrestrained indulgence of one’s desires; ‘lust’ – sinful desires; ‘drunkenness’; ‘orgies’ (*kōmois*) – festive parties involving self-indulgence; ‘carousing’ (*potois*) – drinking parties, often involving excess; ‘detestable (disgusting) idolatry’ (*athemitois eidōlōlatris*) – activities associated with worshiping idols or false gods.

⁵ The activities listed in verse 3 are characterized by unrestrained self-indulgence in sensual pleasures. Verse 4 calls this behavior ‘reckless, wild living.’ Such behavior is motivated by ‘evil human desires’ (4:2). Though self-centered, it is not necessarily individualistic. Such behavior is also motivated by the desire to fit into one’s society.

⁶ Verse 4 says, ‘they heap abuse on you’ (NIV). Why? The believer’s changed behavior implies condemnation of the old behavior – *their* behavior. Also, the believer’s refusal to ‘join them’ may be seen as a rejection of social norms.

- ❑ Those who “heap abuse” on Christians may seem to have an advantage now, but “they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (4:5, *NIV*).⁷
- ❑ Speaking of the dead, what about Christians who have died?⁸ “The Christian dead may have ...been judged by human standards in this life and may been found wanting... However, judged by God’s standards, they are alive in the eternal realm of the Spirit.”⁹ (4:6)

Living the New Life

- ❑ Read 1 Peter 4:7-11. Peter says, “The end of all things is near.”¹⁰ (4:7)
 3. How should knowing this affect our thinking, prayers, and behavior? (4:7)¹¹
 - ❑ The new life should be characterized by particular attitudes and behaviors (4:8-11).
 4. In general, how do the attitudes and behaviors noted in verses 8-11 contrast with those noted in verse 3? How does this great change in attitudes and behaviors happen?
 5. In our relationships with each other, what attitude/behavior is most important, and why? (4:8)¹²
- 📖 “Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers all wrongs” (*Proverbs 10:12, NIV*).
- ❑ God has given believers “gifts” (*charismata*) “to serve others” (4:10).¹³ As believers, we are to be “faithful stewards” of the gifts (and other resources) God has given us.¹⁴
 6. Using God’s gifts of grace involves speech and action (4:11). Based on verse 11, what should characterize our speech and action, and why?

Reflection & Application

- Are you “living the new life” through faith in Jesus Christ? If not, keep seeking to know him.
- As a believer, how well are you “living the new life”? To live the new life, we must “put off” the old and “put on” the new. Reflect on Colossians 3:1-17 and seek God’s transformation.

⁷ Everyone, whether presently alive or dead, will face the future judgment of God. Those who persist in attempting to shame Christ-followers will be ashamed before God, while honor (*not* shame) will belong to believers (2:7, *ESV*).

⁸ Unbelievers may have thought there is no advantage in becoming a Christian, for all without exception die.

⁹ Karen Jobes, *1 Peter* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 271. Jobes’ statement reflects the understanding that ‘the gospel was preached’ to people who became Christians before they died.

¹⁰ This does not necessarily mean ‘the end’ (i.e., Christ’s return) *would* happen in the near future, but believers were (and still are) living in the last stage of God’s redemptive plan. Therefore Christ’s return *could* happen at any time.

¹¹ Verse 7 says we should think rightly, which involves sane, serious, disciplined thinking. This sharply contrasts with the reckless and unrestrained behavior of verse 3. Right thinking leads to right praying. Jesus talked about right thinking and right behavior in Matthew 24:36-51. He said believers should keep watch and be ready for his return (24:42-44). He also said believers should be faithfully serving (as faithful stewards) until he returns (24:45-51).

¹² Peter is not ‘saying that sin in the church should be ignored or denied (“covered up”)’ but rather ‘love covers sins by not responding in kind to behavior that destroys Christian community’ (Jobes, 279). See Colossians 3:13-14.

¹³ *Charismata* (grace-gifts) are generally God-given *abilities* (combined with their related ministries). Grace-gifts are listed in other passages (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28; Romans 12:6-8) though these lists are not exhaustive.

¹⁴ ‘steward’ (*oikonomos*) – person entrusted to manage another person’s property. In this context, God has entrusted gifts to believers to be used for His purposes. This is illustrated in the ‘Parable of the Talents’ (*Matthew 25:14-30*).