

1 Peter 4 Vs 1-6

“Make Your Position Your Practice”

That's the basic thrust that Peter communicates to us in this passage; that what Christ has done *for* you needs to be the reality of what's on display in and *through* you. Your position in Christ is “holy unto God” that's the work Christ has done for you. He's washed you clean through the cleansing flow of His blood, though your sin was as scarlet He's made you white like snow, you're seen by the Father *in Him* absolutely sinless, perfect and with out flaw. That's your position, how's your practice working out? Does your life display what Christ has done for you, is it demonstrated practically by the way you lead your life? “Jeff are you saying that if I'm a Christian I should be living a life of sinless perfection?” No, I'm saying that the pattern of your life in Christ Vs the pattern of your life outside of Christ should be polar opposites, the power of sin has been broken in your life. Therefore you should be walking in the freedom with which Christ has made you free, no longer engaging in worldly activity, things that defile you inwardly, making as it were a mockery of the cross of Christ.

Well, when we left off last time we were discussing the principle of baptism. How that even as Noah and his family (that is 8 souls) were saved through water, there is an antitype that saves us --- baptism, not the removal of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

Real quick before I comment further on that let me make a quick observation and a bit of an application for ya. It stuck out to me that Peter draws attention to the fact that only 8 souls were saved. Now; those who study such things tell us that in the days of Noah the world had a conservative population base of 6 billion people. Out of 6 billion, 8 were saved, the rest thought that Noah was out of his mind. Oh I don't think that all 6 billion knew about Noah, but the scriptures are clear that humanity made a mockery of Noah while he built the ark and obeyed the word of God. Yet in the end Noah was saved and they were lost, what does that tell us? That the majority was wrong, it's interesting that society leads life generally by the “majority rules” type principle. Yet over and over again the scripture demonstrates that as a general rule the majority is wrong, going along with the crowd, the mob mentality. 12 Spies sent into the Promised Land, 10 of which (the majority) said it's no good, we can't overcome the obstacles. Majority ruled, judgment fell; the majority wanted a king, Samuel said, “Follow God, He's your King” the majority overruled, Saul was anointed and it was all downhill from there. Over and over again it was the majority that wanted to head back to Egypt, murmuring and complaining bringing judgment upon the nation. The majority wanted a god fashioned out of gold while Moses was on the Mt, the majority cried out “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.”

What am I saying? Be careful when it comes to following along with the flow, going with the popular opinion, is it *always* wrong? I wouldn't say that, but the majority of people are unbelievers, they don't have the Holy Spirit placing them in check, they don't have the Word of God to look to and be governed by. They're just doing what seems right in their own eyes and are generally looking to somehow satisfy, or gratify the flesh. They make a mockery of your convictions, be careful of the justification "everyone's doing it" well it must be ok then right? Wrong.

Ok, I don't want to spend an extensive amount of time on the principle of baptism but I do want to make clear that Peter in no way indicates here (in Vs 21 of Ch 3) that the ritual of water baptism equals salvation for anyone. It was the shedding the blood of Christ, His death, burial and resurrection that "sealed" the salvation "deal" and we're saved by grace through faith in Christ and His work on our behalf. It's not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience before God. As we pointed out last time apart from Christ we don't have a *good* conscience we have a *guilty* conscience, it's in Him that we're made right in the sight of God and our conscience is cleansed.

Baptism paints a practical picture outwardly of what Christ has done for me internally, that is, in my heart. I believe it's an essential aspect of our obedience to the Lord, He commanded it, we should do it. But if you receive Christ on your deathbed, or for health reasons can't come to the creek and be baptized you're not going to hell. Salvation is not acquired through a work that we do for Christ, but rather the work He's done for us.

Baptism demonstrates (as it was portrayed through the flood) a complete cleansing of the old life and being "lifted out" of death/judgment and brought to a new life altogether. Noah went from life being one way before the flood, to everything changing, everything being completely different, old things passing away all things being made new after the flood. Baptism sends out the signal that even as the flood wiped out the old sinful world, there has (through Christ) been a complete break with my old sinful life and I'm now entering a new life in Christ. What does the bible say? 2 Cor 5:17, "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*" Christ is our "ark," we're to abide in Him, it's in Him that we're lifted out of the waters of judgment and brought into new life. So don't be confused the bible is clear, it's the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from sin, not the waters of baptism. But baptism does point to my identification with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection whereby I'm now dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Vs1

Ok, there are a couple of things in this Vs that we do well to draw attention to and work our way through. Because if we're not careful we might glean some wrong implications, Peter speaks of the mind of Christ (that's not too confusing), then he speaks of suffering in the flesh and ceasing from sin, we want to isolate that for a little bit.

But 1st lets consider this resolve that we're called to. He says, "Therefore," now you remember that Vs 19-21 of Ch 3 aren't Peter's primary point in that passage, they were peripheral to the point. The primary point that he's referring back to through this word "therefore" is found in Vs 18 of Ch 3 (read)... "*Therefore*, since Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind," now this word "arm" is obviously a military term, to be "armed" with something, it's in the imperative mood meaning it's a non option command that we're to obey.

Ok then, with in this context what does it mean to "arm ourselves" with the same mind as Christ? We're talking here about a resolve to be obedient to the will of God regardless of the personal cost, that we're determined to never be dissuaded nor discouraged from God's plan for our lives.

Jesus communicated this same idea when on *His way* to the cross He told those who would desire to follow Him, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" Matt 16:24 The thought being that we're to count the cost, deny ourselves and commit to following Christ no matter where that might *lead* us or what it might mean *to us* in this world. We're called to grab hold of the plow and not look back; the cross speaks of what? It speaks of crucifying the flesh, that is the putting to death of the self-life, it's the dying to *my* will that I might follow through and fulfill the will of another, in this case God's will for my life. (If you were to see someone carrying a cross in Jesus' day you can count on the fact that they weren't about their own will, it was someone else's will they were fulfilling). What else does the cross speak of? Commitment, again you seen someone carrying a cross, listen, they were committed, there was going to be follow through there and nothing was going to change it. It's like a plate of bacon and eggs, the chicken may be involved but the pig committed. Christ calls us to wholehearted, unrelenting commitment, being prepared to endure through struggles and in some cases even suffering for His sake; the Christian life is not a primrose problem free existence, nevertheless we're to be armed with the attitude and resolve of heart that Christ had to be committed to God's purpose in and through our lives, even should it involve suffering.

“Arm yourself with the same mind” people get defeated in their battle against sin all the time because they’re not armed with the resolve that Christ had, they refuse to sacrifice anything in the battle. They want victory, but not at any price, I’ll take it if it’s easy and if it comes conveniently but if it costs me, I’m out. Jesus called us to take whatever radical steps or make the sacrifice we might have to make in order to maintain a life that was holy and set apart to God. If we’re not willing to count the cost than it’s best to not even enter the fight, why start something that you haven’t really thought through and have no real resolve to finish in the face of adversity?

“Arm yourself with the same mind,” with the same determination and care that a soldier puts on his armor (as though his life depends on it) believers are to adopt the same attitude and mindset as Christ toward persecution in an unswerving resolve to do God’s will.

“For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,” what does that mean? Well 1st of all lets establish what it doesn’t mean. What it doesn’t mean is that suffering physically leads sinlessness practically. You follow that train of thought and you’ll wind up traveling down the pathway of asceticism whereby you continually punish yourself and make yourself to suffer thinking that will somehow eradicate sin in your life.

It’s true that at times God will utilize suffering in order to turn us away from sin, but that’s not what Peter is pressing here, nor do we want to interpret this to say that if I suffer enough I’ll be sinless. We’ve got to keep the context, the context is speaking about the fact that Christ suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that we identify with Him through baptism saying that we’ve died to the old life and have been given new life in Christ. In keeping with that flow of thought it seems to me that Peter is placing in short form here the principle that Paul expounded on in Romans Ch 6, (do me a favor, leave 1st Peter and make your way quickly to Rom 6 [Vs 1-11]). As come into the context here Paul is sharing how God made a way of reconciliation with Him where there was no way through Christ, that where sin abounded grace abounded much more (read).

In Gal 2:20 he said it like this, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* Gal 2:20 and Again in Ch 5, *“And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* Gal 5:24

Peter is saying that you’re in Christ and in Christ sin shall no longer have dominion over you for you are not under law but under grace. The verb translated “ceased” here is really sort of a poor translation. It’s a verb that’s in the middle voice which means that it’s not really the subject that’s acting, but rather the subject is being acted upon, it’s a passive verb. More accurate it should be translated, “has gotten release from sin.”

What this is saying is that Christ has broken sin's dominion over you and that in Him you've been set free. Christ has suffered for your sins, and you have been crucified with Christ, therefore the life you now live you don't live for the lusts of the flesh but for the will of God (who has loved you and given Himself for you). Jesus died to set you free from sins grip on your life and the penalty it imposes. You see? Why did Christ suffer for us? *Ultimately* (Vs 18 Ch 3) that He might bring us to God; *presently* (Vs 2).

Vs 2

Why did Christ break the chains of sin in your life? So that you should no longer live the rest of your time here in this world for the lusts of men, you are, I am dead to sin. Does that mean we'll never sin again? No, it means the pattern of sin in my life, in your life has been broken, we don't live to feed to flesh but to walk in the Spirit and lead a life that's pleasing *to* and usable *by* God. You see we're not to live the rest of our time in this life seeking to feed the lusts of the flesh (translation = dead to sin), but for the will of God (translation = alive to God in Christ Jesus).

God wants to use your life, He wants to be glorified *through* your life, He can't do that as long as you're prioritizing sin and refuse to simply set your life apart to Him. This is part of that resolve to make our position our practice, we should (notice) *no longer* live to feed the sinful impulse of the flesh, the appropriate answer to temptation is what, "no longer." That man, that woman is dead, I'm not going there anymore, I've been set free in Christ I'm no longer a slave to the sinful impulse of my flesh, I'm free to follow Christ instead, obey the word and walk in the Spirit.

So that's what we're *not* to do with our time, fulfill lustful desires. What then *are we* to fulfill with our time? The will of God, God has given us a span of time here on this earth, we're to be careful to seek out how it is that He would have to occupy that time and then be diligent to do it.

Vs3

Those kind of things are things of the past, that was when you didn't *know* the Lord, didn't follow *after* the Lord or really care *about* the Lord. Those kind of things may be a part of your history, but it's not who you're to be presently. A noted Greek Scholar by the name of Kenneth Wuest said this, "The word "past" describing time is in the Greek the perfect participle of a verb meaning "to pass by, to go past." The tense used implies that the course is closed and done, and looked back upon as a standing and accomplished fact. Thus should a Christian view his life previous to salvation, namely, as a closed matter. He died with Christ, and has been raised to newness of life. Old things have passed away. All things have become new. The old habits, associates, practices, places, amusements, everything of the old life which is not in accord with the Word of God should be taboo in the new life he is now living as a Christian.¹⁷"

¹Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (1 Pe 4:3). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Again to the Romans Paul wrote, *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”* Rom 13:12-14

We’ve spent enough of our past lifetime leading the reprobate lifestyle of the unbeliever. I think that sadly too many Christians (if they were to be completely honest) think that they *haven’t* spent enough time doing the will of the ungodly. The want to experience more of the world before they make a complete commitment to leading a life that’s set apart to Christ, they want to revel in the things that placed Christ on the cross.

Things like “lewdness” or unbridled lusts, unrestrained in moral attitudes and behavior, this word lends itself most commonly to illicit sexual activity. “Lusts” which speaks of a longing for something that’s forbidden, doesn’t have to be sexual, I think covetousness would fit in this category, craving/pursuing things that are unhealthy for me spiritually. “Drunkenness” I think that pretty much speaks for itself, it’s amazing to me how Christians will go to the mat defending their liberty to drink yet it’s almost if not completely impossible to find anything positive in the scriptures regarding drinking. You can find all kinds of negative connotations and warnings against the subtle nature of its bite, how it will destroy you work devastation and if you’re not careful even condemnation in you yet people still insist on their “liberty,” be careful. “Revelries,” the word is “carousing” or prodigal living; “Drinking parties” (Peter hits it twice here) this refers to drinking and the subsequent immoral behavior that often times accompanies it. “And abominable idolatries” placing anything above the Lord in your hearts priority, perhaps money or the pursuit of power and positions of authority, whatever the master passion of your heart may be.

Now, don’t think that this is it with regard to ungodly behavior, it’s not an exhaustive list of sin, it’s a simply an example of sinful kind of behavior that the ungodly engage in that you shouldn’t, you’ve died to those things. You’re not going to wallow around in sinful activity, it’s “no longer” for you, it’s in the past, you’re living the rest of your time not for the lusts of men but for the will of God.

It’s interesting to think that after 2,000 yrs man hasn’t progressed much have he? People are still dealing with the same issues now as they were then.

Vs4-5

You're snatched from pit of hell and the path of destruction, Jesus saves you from your own demise, your life does a 180 and the people around you don't really get you anymore. They don't think it's weird when people destroy their bodies, wreck their homes, or ruin their lives, but watch a drunkard become sober, or an immoral individual become pure and suddenly they're out of their mind! It's amazing when a person wants their spouse to return to their reprobate lifestyle because at least then knew what was up, or parents want their child to just start partying again because at least then they understood them.

When you go from of the world to in Christ your life changes and often times people you thought were your friends suddenly turn on you. You used to be the life of the party, now your phone doesn't ring, you're a bible thumper, a holier than thou, some sorta religious fanatic!

They can begin to speak evil of you, accusing you of judging them they've already judged you. Vs 5, They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. That's a sobering statement isn't? God keeps record of every word, every inward intent of the heart and 1 day man will be called to account; and if judgment begins in the house of God what will become of the ungodly and disobedient? Thank God if you're in Christ, your sin has been dealt with and put away. Oh you'll be judged in the context of trying the intent of your heart, seeing if what you did yields gold, silver, precious stones to the glory of God, or motivated by your own self serving agenda your works produce wood, hay and stubble that will go up in smoke. However the account of my sin is found in Christ, not so for the ungodly.

Vs6

This is sort of another one of those statements that make us scratch our head and say, "Ok, what are you talking about?" Couple of thoughts on it then we'll close. I think the initial reaction is to try and link it with Vs 19-20 of Ch 3, however we have to bear in mind the difference that Peter made regarding the "disobedient spirits" the fact that they were in "prison" and that the word "spirits" that he employs is extremely rare in implying a human spirit but more commonly a supernatural spirit.

If this refers back to that interim period in which the body of Christ was in the tomb (which to me this statement seems fairly far removed from that flow of thought to just suddenly jump back to it) then I would be more likely to link this Vs with Eph 4:7-9 concerning Christ's descending into the lower parts of the earth, prior to His ascension and giving gifts (with reference to gifts of the Spirit) to men. We spoke of the fact that those who looked forward to the coming of the Messiah by faith were taken to Abraham's bosom prior to the cross (Luke 16). It would seem plausible that when Christ released His spirit upon the cross that not only did He pronounce judgment upon the powers and principalities of darkness (grab our last study), but that to the righteous dead He shared the gospel as really a completion (if you will) of the salvation of those who'd anticipated the Messiah and in hope trusted in God for that.

Again nowhere in the scriptures do we glean the idea of a 2nd chance for someone after they've died; this would be a reference to the good news of the Messiah coming to those who'd in hope anticipated God sending Him.

The other thought is that this is simply a contrast with Vs 5, that the unregenerate will face judgment for their sins, but those who'd believe the gospel would face an altogether different future. They were still judged in the flesh in that the wages of sin is death, they still died physically, but being absent from the body they are present with the Lord and will be for all eternity. The overall thrust being that we're not to fear men (who speak evil of us) but fear God who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Again Kenneth Wuest offers this explanation, "The words "in the flesh" are to be construed with "might be judged," for they balance up the words "in the spirit" which clearly are to be understood with "live." We have here the dative of respect. These Christians were judged with respect to the flesh, that is, with respect to their earthly existence in the body. The natural result of accepting the gospel would be the living of a Christian life, and the natural result of that would be persecution. But these Christians died, many of them as martyrs. Now, in heaven they were living according to the Word of God with respect to their spirits, their human spirits. They in their disembodied state were serving the Lord in the future life." ²

I think for you and me we do well to end on this note: "For this reason the gospel was preached." For what reason? Vs 5, because judgment is coming, the gospel goes out, Christ died for your sins, He shed His blood, laid down His life and rose again the 3rd day so that by faith in Him you might be made right in the sight of God and free from chains and the bondage of sin. Now you have a choice; accept it, be forgiven of your sin and receive the free gift of everlasting life. Or reject it and stand alone to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead...As for you believer don't revel in the things that placed Christ on the cross, be done with that stuff and make your position your practice.

²Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (1 Pe 4:6). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Prayer Points:

Lord help us not to concern ourselves with what anyone else thinks of us, but only what You think, that we might lead lives set apart to You and free from the chains found in the enticements and temptations of this world. That we no longer live the rest of our time, the brief time we have on this earth for the lusts of men, but Father, for Your will...

The gospel has gone out and now comes your opportunity to accept it or reject it. If you've not given your heart to Christ, and you know in your heart that maybe you've gone to church, or you know *about* God, but you don't have a relationship *with* God, you don't have a life that in anyway seeks to honor God because you love God, you've not asked Christ into your heart that He might forgive you of your sin than why not do that right here and right now?