

Text: 1 Peter 4.4-5

Christianity means change for every believer.

I am not sure what to make of believers who want to act like the world. This is contrary to every exhortation and command of the New Testament. It's also contrary to logic.

A man comes to a place where they recognize they are a sinner, subject to the wrath of God, unable to save himself. He learns that Christ paid the penalty for his sin, and offers forgiveness and eternal life if the man will repent of his self-righteousness and trust in Christ alone for salvation.

The man calls on Jesus for salvation, and according to the Bible, God saves him.

Well, that's glorious.

The world and the devil don't give up, however. The man is saved, but he still has a flesh, a sinful nature. The world and the devil appeal to that nature — the "easy way" is offered, the "you don't need to be that strict" rationale is touted, the "you don't want to alienate your friends" excuse is run out...

Many Christians, faced with the *appeal* and the *pressure* of the world will make some adjustments to the way they approach their life. There are all kinds of reasons to justify a "more relaxed approach," and so they do.

Well, there are some problems with that. The preachers will nag you. (Other Christians, maybe, as well.) And then the apostles get into the act. Passages like the one we are in right now downright contradict a philosophy of conformity to the world.

Read 1 Peter 4.1-6, text 4-5

I've called this message, "**Running with the Dead.**"

That's exactly what the apostles exhort us not to do, run with the dead, and that is the theme of this paragraph.

Proposition: Christians who "run with the dead" are running in the wrong direction.

I. Consider yourself dead so as to live for the will of God (1-2)

A. The ground of the command: "since Christ has suffered in the flesh" (1)

1. That is, he died

2. So the death of Christ is the foundation of our obedience to the following command

B. The essence of the command: “arm yourselves ... so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh ... for the will of God” (1-2)

1. We are to make a spiritual decision

- a. Arm ourselves with the same purpose (the purpose to die to sin)
- b. Reckon ourselves “dead indeed unto sin” (Rm 6.11)

2. The purpose of this decision is to live by faith in the spirit, to live for the will of God

This principle is a vital aspect of the Christian life. It requires daily renewal and a daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.

- Prayer
- Bible reading
- Church attendance
- Other Christian disciplines

II. Reason one: You are well past all that (3)

A. You’ve already devoted enough time to the desire of the Gentiles

1. Your former life was “enough”

- a. In Jn 6.7, Phillip says, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient...” — not *enough* to feed the crowd (the 5,000)
- b. In Mt 25.9, the wise virgins refuse to share the oil of their lamps, for “there will not be enough for us and you...”

2. But your former life was enough to fill up your quota of the desire of the Gentiles

Think about it: no matter how young you were when you became a Christian, you had enough time for sin.

B. The desire of the Gentiles drives the course of life in the world to the fullest indulgence of the flesh

1. Since you’ve had enough of that
2. You don’t need anymore

Therefore, arm yourself with the same purpose as was in Jesus as he went to the cross, dying to sin.

III. Reason two: They will give account for all that (4-5)

A. The Gentiles are surprised at your new lifestyle

1. The course of your life has changed (4)

a. In the ancient world, civic occasions involved pagan rites (including fleshly indulgence)

- 1) The Christians avoided participation – if faithful Christians
- 2) This made no sense to the pagans

b. In our world, life is saturated with fleshly indulgences, with or without “religious rites”

- 1) Christians need to evaluate our world: what aspects of our culture are *neutral* at least?
- 2) When you subject our world to a test, the test itself seems weird to the world

“what’s with you, are you an abnormal freak?”

c. Note: dissipation

- 1) Same root as “salvation”
- 2) Has negative particle attached: “describes something devoid of a saving quality”¹

Think of the Prodigal Son who wasted his substance on riotous living – this is the course the world runs after, but the Christian does (or ought) not.

2. They malign you

a. The word is “to blaspheme”

b. Interestingly, the “you” is not in the original, the translators are helping us out

c. Reality: Gentiles abuse us and blaspheme God for our “weirdness”

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 263.

B. The Gentiles will give account for their lifestyle (5)

1. They will be in court with no answer
2. They will stand before the one Person who can judge every other person
 - a. Living: those alive at his coming
 - b. Dead: all the dead who are summoned to that great court at the Great White Throne (Rev 20)

C. The believer must consider what it means to run with the Gentiles

1. The direction the Gentiles run is towards judgement
2. You can escape persecution by running with the Gentiles
3. You can't escape God

Conclusion:

Proposition: Christians who “run with the dead” are running in the wrong direction.

Living for the will of God has the Lord's approval:

Mk 3.35 “For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.”

Rm 12.1-2 ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove [demonstrate] what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

1Th 4.3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

Heb 10.36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

1 Jn 2.17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.