

THE CHRISTIAN'S RADICAL LIFESTYLE

*3¹⁸ Christ also died for sins once for all, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones, so that he might bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive [again] by the Spirit. ¹⁹By [the Spirit] he also went and preached to the spirits who [now] are bound; ²⁰[namely,] those who were disobedient back when the patience of God was waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built. By means of [that ark] a few, that is, [only] eight souls, were brought safely through the water. ²¹The thing that corresponds to [that water, namely,] baptism, now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but the pledge to God of a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ²²He is [now] at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven. Angels and authorities and powers have been put in submission to him. **4**Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, also fortify yourselves with the same attitude, because he who suffered in the flesh is done with sin. ²As a result, he does not live the remainder of his [earthly] life for [evil] human desires, but for the will of God. ³You have spent enough time in the past doing what the Gentiles choose to do: living for debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry. ⁴Engaged in such a lifestyle, they think that it is strange for you not to plunge with them into the same flood of dissolute living, so they malign you. ⁵They will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶This, indeed, is why the gospel was preached to those who are dead [in their sins; namely,] so that they might be condemned as men who indulge their sinful nature, and that they might live for God by the Spirit. (1 Pet. 3:18-4:6)*

Introduction

A middle-aged husband and wife pack up their children and a few cherished belongs and turn their backs on suburbia—they leave behind the luxuries and comforts of their upscale home in order to relocate in the north woods, 200 miles away from civilization—that's a radical lifestyle!

One day a young woman tunes in a T.V. show promoting the latest physical fitness program, she gets hooked and goes on a health kick: a strict vegetarian diet, 5 a.m. jogs along the beach, a household full of exercise equipment, a library full of diet cookbooks—that's a radical lifestyle!

A teenage couple leave their Harley motorcycle in the parking lot and stride into the mall: their hair is dyed in matching shades of orange, their leather jackets are weighed down with gaudy chains of jewelry—that's a radical lifestyle!

Examples of radical lifestyles? Not really. Take away the different wardrobes or diets or residences, get down to the heart and the outlook on life and you will find a basic conformity: a conformity to this world.

Do you want to see a really radical lifestyle? Look in the mirror. As someone who has been born again by the Spirit of God, someone who has died to the world and

been made alive unto God, you have a radically different motivation, orientation and perspective—and that should express itself in a radically different lifestyle! Because you have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you must now live the radical lifestyle that is consistent with that profession of faith.

I. Because of Your Profession of Faith in Christ, ...You Must Live for the Will of God

Peter's reference to the days of Noah and the great flood, the time when "*eight souls were brought safely through the water*" (3:20), leads him to a discussion of Christian baptism (vs. 21.) Peter immediately directs our attention to the spiritual significance of the sacrament of baptism. He indicates that he is not concerned about "*the removal of the dirt from the flesh;*" that is to say, the merely external application of the water to the body in the ceremony of baptism. What he is concerned about is what he identifies as "*the pledge to God of a good conscience;*" i.e.; a genuine profession of faith originating out of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with a view towards a life of commitment to God. Submission to the sacrament of baptism together with his public profession of faith is a man's testimony to his faith in Christ and his commitment to Christ.

Peter goes on to relate baptism (the spiritual event of which the sacrament is a sign and seal) to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We may turn to Romans 6:1-14, where the Apostle Paul presents a fuller discussion of this same topic:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection—⁶for we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we should no longer be slaves to sin, ⁷because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, ⁹for we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. ¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness, ¹⁴for sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. (Rom. 6:1-14)

In verse 1 of Romans 6 the question is being raised, "As a Christian, may one continue to practice one's former lifestyle of sin?" In verse 2 Paul supplies the answer: "God forbid! Such cannot be the case because as a Christian **you have died to sin.**" In verse 3 Paul supplies the explanation: When you were baptized into Christ Jesus you were baptized into His death. By the grace of God, through your faith in Christ Jesus—expressed by means of public profession of faith and submission to the sacrament of baptism—you were spiritually united to Christ in His death. What happened at the time of your conversion was nothing less than having your old sinful heart put to death by virtue of Christ's death upon the cross as you were spiritually united to Him. We might seek to understand this inexplicable spiritual phenomenon by saying, at moment you gave your heart to Christ, He brought it back to Calvary and brought it into His death upon the cross, note Galatians 2:20, *"I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ living in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."*

Verse 4 relates the significance of this spiritual event: just as your heart has been united to Christ in His death, so, too, is it united to Christ in His resurrection. By virtue of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, (publicly expressed by a profession of faith and submission to baptism), you now have a new resurrected heart and nature that shares in Christ's resurrection life. Christ, in His resurrection life, *"lives to God"* (vs. 10.) That is to say, He lives in the presence of God, He lives in fellowship with God, He lives in obedience to the commandments of God—as a believer in Christ the same is now also true of your new heart and nature.

Verses 11-13 provide the practical application of these things: recognize that you are *"dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus"* (vs. 11.) Recognize that your heart has lost its connection to sin and has become connected to God by virtue of your relationship to Jesus Christ. Paul describes the old heart (mind and nature) in Romans 8:7, *"the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so."* He describes the new heart in Romans 7:22, *"in my inner being I delight in God's law."* Now you are responsible, in reliance upon the grace of God, to live out in your daily life this great spiritual reality that has taken place in your heart and in your relationship to God; consequently, Paul gives the exhortation: Do not turn your body and mind over to sin, instead, turn them over to God on a daily basis (vs. 12-13.)

Verse 14 provides the motivation for obedience, the encouragement for obedience; namely, the grace of God: *"you are ... under grace."* It is by divine grace that you have been brought to God and it is by reliance on that divine resource that you live your everyday life for God. We have been brought into the realm of grace, now we must avail ourselves of that grace in our endeavors to live out the new life we have in Christ our Savior.

Now in chapter 4, verses 1-2, Peter confronts us with the same application as does the Apostle Paul in Romans 6. By virtue of His death, Christ *"is done with sin"*

(vs. 1.) That is to say, He was removed from this present world that is dominated by sin; He no longer had to bear it and interact with it; note, again, Romans 6:10, *“The death [Christ] died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.”* Because of our spiritual connection to Christ—our union with Christ—in His death and resurrection, we must no longer live the remainder of our earthly life *“for [evil] human desires, but for the will of God”* (vs. 2.) We are no longer to live for the sake of indulging and satisfying the sinful lusts; rather, we are to live for God. Note the Apostle Paul’s testimony in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11,

Do you not realize that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor those who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

As believers in Christ, our hearts have been cleansed from the practice of sin and have been renewed; now we must not give ourselves to those sinful practices any longer.

Because of our profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must now live our lives for the will of God. As a believer in Christ, your new pre-occupation and governing principle is obedience to the will of God, as that holy will is defined by His commandments.

II. Because of Your Profession of Faith in Christ, ...You Must Live a Life that Astounds the World

In verse 3 of chapter four the Apostle Peter describes the lifestyle that was commonplace in his day (and is very much so in our day as well):

“debauchery” (or, *“wanton sensuality”*)—casting off or disregarding moral restraint; indulging and gratifying the lusts of the body and of the mind; indecency (abandoning modesty in dress, in conduct, in relationships)

“lust” (or, *“passions”*)—allowing one’s self to be controlled by ungodly emotions, (such as unrestrained sexual desires, jealousy, covetousness, bitterness, rage, etc.); the failure to exercise self-control

“drunkenness”—allowing one’s self to be controlled by intoxicating drink; resorting to liquor, or drugs, as a way of escape rather than turning to Christ

“orgies, carousing,”—parties that degenerate into all sorts of sexually immoral and perverse behavior; parties that feature drinking to excess with

the end result being intoxication with all of its attendant evils, such as blasphemy, sexually misconduct, and brawling

“detestable idolatry”—it is significant that Peter places the pagans’ religion at the end of the list of their vices. Their religion did not have an uplifting influence in their lives; on the contrary, it was a contributing factor to their sinful conduct and was often times indistinguishable from the grossest acts of that conduct.

In contrast, our faith in Christ must have a radically different affect upon our life and conduct: lifting us out of sin and into holiness. Consider the following “testimonies” made by unbelievers as they observe and describe the character of professing “Christians”: “He curses, he steals, he holds grudges, he gets drunk, he lives with his girlfriend, and he goes to church.” “He’s just like us! He just has this little quirk that he goes to church—a tradition from the past he hasn’t managed to shake off.” If such “testimonies” describe you, and if you see no contradiction between such scenarios and a genuine Christian life, there is something radically wrong with your view of Christianity, something radically wrong with your life, something radically wrong with your heart. There is no evidence of conversion unto Christ.

In verse 4 Peter reports the reaction of the pagan community (the neighbors, the friends or former friends, the relatives, the co-workers) to the new and godly lifestyle of these Christian people. The pagan community is astonished. They find it amazing, even strange, that the Christians do not join them as they plunge themselves into *“a flood of dissolute living,”* (i.e.; unrestrained lawlessness, riotousness.) Do we ever find ourselves as Christians being viewed by the pagan community around us as being strange because of our Christian lifestyle? As Christians, we are called to become like Christ, of whom it is written, he *“knew no sin”* (2 Cor. 5:21,) not like those of whom the Apostle John wrote, those who boasted that they *“know the deep things of Satan”* (Rev. 2:24.)

Furthermore, the pagan community heaped abuse upon these Christian people. Because these Christians did not join with their pagan neighbors in their lifestyle of ungodliness and immorality, but rather stood as a witness against them. The Christians to whom and about whom Peter writes were, by their lives, putting into practice the admonition the Apostle Paul gave to the church in Ephesus:

Previously, you were [part of the] darkness, but now you belong to the light in the Lord; [therefore,] walk as children of light—⁹the fruit of the light consists of all goodness and righteousness and truth—¹⁰demonstrating what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead rebuke them, ¹²for it is shameful to even speak about the things that they are doing in secret. (Eph. 5:8-12)

By living out their new life in Christ, as we are called to do, these Christian people were experiencing the very reaction of the world foretold by our Lord Himself: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before you. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you"* (Jn. 15:18-19.)

In verse 5 Peter goes on to warn that there is coming a day of accountability. The whole world shall finally give an account of their lives when they stand before the LORD God their Creator and Judge, as the Apostle Paul declared to the Athenians: *"[God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice"* (Acts 17:31.) The Christian, too, shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of his life:

... we make it our goal, whether at home [in the body] or absent [from the body], to be well-pleasing to [Christ]; ¹⁰because all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ; so that each one may receive the just reward for the deeds done while living in this earthly body. Each one will be rewarded for what he has done, according to whether it was good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:9-10)

In the light of these things, we must soberly consider such questions as these: How do I live? For what do I live? For whom do I live?

Because of our profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we must live lives that astound the pagan world. We must live such lives because we no longer belong to the world, but to Christ. We must be keenly aware of the fact that we— together with the whole world—shall give an account of ourselves to Christ.

Conclusion

Do you want to see a real, honest to goodness radical? Look in the mirror. As one who has been born again by the Spirit of God, as one who has died to the world and been made alive to God, you have a radically different identity. You have a new heart, a new mind, a new nature, a new perspective, a new motivation—and all this must express itself in a radically different lifestyle. Because you have made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you must now live the radical lifestyle that is consistent with that profession.