

## **“A Break from the Past”**

1 Peter 4:1-6  
January 21, 2007  
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I've been asked, “Wouldn't you like to be young again?”

I don't know what they are inferring by that but I chose not to take offense.

More specifically they are asking, “Would you want to live your teens and twenties again?”

I can honestly say, “No!”

There are challenges at every age or stage of life but I do believe that the pressure to conform is greatest when we are younger.

At the very least the pressure is more overt.

And what I have in mind is pressures on us from others to do things we think or know are wrong.

The pressure comes either from others encouraging us to do something wrong and our desire to conform because of potential ridicule for not doing it.

It starts early in life.

What young boy wants to be thought of as a sissy or afraid?

There are the dares to steal something just to do it, to destroy someone's property just to see if you can, or to gang up on a misfit just because someone in the group thinks it's clever.

That pressure to conform certainly continues into the teens and early twenties.

For what reason would a teenaged boy barrel down a country road in a car at night with no lights playing “chicken” against another boy in an on-coming car except for the thrill of flirting with danger and a whole lot of pressure to be “man enough.”

And then invariably it seems the pressure mounts to engage in all kinds of activities that go against much you've been taught.

Experimenting with alcohol, drugs, and sex seems driven not only by our own sinful cravings but also by so-called “friends” and an entire culture that threaten to ostracize us if we don’t.

I can remember the not-so-subtle ridicule of us boys who hadn’t “gone all the way” with girls or hadn’t downed a six-pack in so many minutes.

Regardless of what the movie is actually about, because I don’t know, the very title of a 2005 movie indicates the cultural pressure on our young adults.

The implication is that it’s inconceivable - a “40 Year-Old Virgin.”

But the pressure is not only present during the years when hormones are raging.

- It comes from the boss who passes you by for promotion because you won’t play the after-hours game of wining and partying clients.
- It’s the your exclusion from peers at work or neighborhood because your very noninvolvement indicts their water-cooler story-telling, their weekend binges, and their sexual escapades.
- It’s the family members who treat you like some kind of cult-member or at the very least “weird” because of the Kingdom-of-God choices you make with your time and money and children.

I’m very grateful we live in a society where they can’t yet imprison us for refusing to go along with their ways but it doesn’t mean we don’t feel the pressure.

In the NT letter we are studying these weeks, the Apostle Peter has written to a group of Christians who are apparently experiencing pressure to abandon or at least “tone down” their faith.

- In chapter 1 he mentioned it: 1 Peter 1:6 “...even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials...”
- In chapter 2 he spoke of those who slander you and who mistreat you.

- In chapter 3 he wrote, 1 Peter 3:14 “...even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness...” and in 1 Peter 3:17 “For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.”

Now in chapter 4 he continues his counsel to those who are suffering - experiencing pressure, criticism, even abuse for living as Christians.

I want you to follow along as I read 1 Peter 4:1-6 and I want you see why I began this message the way I did.

1 Peter 4:1-6 “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. <sup>2</sup> As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. <sup>3</sup> For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. <sup>4</sup> They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. <sup>5</sup> But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. <sup>6</sup> For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Pray

So what counsel does Peter give to the Christian who is feeling the pressure of ridicule, criticism or worse?

- What does he say to the “teen” or “twenty-something” who faces pressure to conform?
- What does he say to the employee who is paying the price for refusing to go along?
- What does he write to the Christian who is ostracized by even his own family?

**I. He begins, I think, by saying, “I want you to remember the past.”**

**We find that in verses 1-3.**

First of all, he says, remember that **Christ suffered, in his body**. Yes, Jesus' experience was real; he felt the pain of rejection, the ridicule of others, the abandonment of even his own followers.

Some might respond, "But he was God. That doesn't affect him the way it would us."

But the Scripture says in Hebrews 4:15 "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted (tested) in every way, just as we are..."

Do you remember what Peter wrote earlier about what Jesus experienced?

1 Peter 2:23 "When they hurled their insults at him... when he suffered..."

He has experienced what we experience!

Since we are following Jesus, emulating him, it is helpful to see what he did when facing opposition.

And so Peter continues in verse 1, "**arm yourselves also with the same attitude.**"

If you want to stand up to the pressure and not "cave" then you need to "arm" your brain.

Or as Paul said to the Ephesians after describing the full armor of God, "With this in mind."

You need to get some things firmly in mind that will help you ward off the pressure, to defend yourself.

This word "attitude" should be unpacked a little.

It is a word that means more than just a passing thought; it expresses a frame of reference, an attitude.

The word can also be translated "purpose" or "resolve."

It's a strong word meaning a considered conviction.

So what attitude or considered conviction did Jesus have?

Though it is difficult text, I am quite certain that what follows in the verse explains the conviction we are to have to withstand the pressure.

The attitude or resolve is expressed this way at the end of verse 1:  
**“because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.”**

There are some who think this clause is saying something very similar to chapter 2:22-25; that Jesus died to sin so that we too would be dead to sin’s control.

While that concept is true, it doesn’t fit this context very well.

Others think this clause means that suffering teaches us not to sin.

While it is true that suffering for Christ does strengthen some, it is also true that it causes others to “bail out.”

I also don’t think that interpretation fits the idea of an attitude or resolve we are to have that is like Christ’s attitude.

I think the way to make best sense of this difficult clause is to think of it as the statement of a principle – a principle lived out by Christ.

And so the principle is, “he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.”

What does that mean?

It can’t mean that if a Christian suffers he is “done with sin” as in ‘he will never sin again.’

That defies both experience and the Scripture for we are told in 1 John 1:8 “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

I would instead paraphrase it this way, **“The one who has withstood suffering-for-righteousness has already demonstrated a resolve to steadfastly resist sin.”**

Years ago I heard a pastor say that one way to test the genuineness of someone’s conversion to Christ is to ask what being a Christian has cost him?

Jesus demonstrated that resolve to refuse sin.

And you too, when you came to Christ, you made a decision to repent, to turn away from sin and to trust and obey Jesus.

The person who is willing to suffer rather than sin sees sin for what it is and wants nothing to do with it.

That is corroborated by the next verse: 1 Peter 4:2 “**As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.**”

Like Christ you have already made the decision.

That is what repentant-faith is all about.

As I said, it is about turning from sin and turning to Christ to trust and obey him.

Again, this doesn't mean you will never sin but it does mean that you have, by God's grace, set a new direction for your life.

Here's the way Joshua said it, Joshua 24:14-15 “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.”<sup>15</sup> But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

I know it is as popular in our day as in the Apostles' day to talk about **grace but not holiness** and to talk about **faith but not repentance**.

I know there are those who speak of receiving **Jesus as Savior but not as Lord**.

But there is no biblical Christianity that does not include repentance – an intentional resolve to turn away from sin.

I have had other illustrations of the opposite of this too recent to mention but I well remember the unmarried young man and woman who were in a Bible study I led.

After months of attendance they came to me one night and said, “We want to become Christians. But there is a problem. We are sleeping together regularly; we know the Bible says it's wrong but we don't want to quit. Can we still become Christians?”

I loved them both and I was gentle in my response but I had to be firm – there is no salvation without repentance – without a willingness to turn from sin.

Ezekiel wrote: Ezekiel 14:6 “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Repent! Turn **from** your idols and **renounce** all your detestable practices!”

Jesus said in Luke 13:5 “**unless you repent**, you too will all perish.”

Paul wrote in Acts 26:20 “I preached that they should repent and turn to God and **prove their repentance** by their deeds.”

I know there are many who want to reduce salvation to trusting Jesus instead of trusting ourselves, which is certainly the fundamental aspect of conversion,

but as the word “conversion” denotes, coming to Christ must also mean renouncing sin and choosing holiness.

As I have said so often this doesn’t mean “perfection” but it must mean “direction.”

Peter says I want you to remember Christ’s resolve and the resolve you made when you began to trust and follow Christ.

**And I also want you to remember the past that you left.**

**1 Peter 4:3 “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.”**

I know that among some young adults raised in Christian homes there is the temptation to think, “I’m a Christian but I’m not ready yet to settle down; I’d like to sow some wild oats first and then later I’ll get serious about my faith.”

Knowing the deceitful, seductive and enslaving power of sin, Peter would write in his next letter:

2 Peter 2:18-21 Those who would deceive you, “mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from

those who live in error. <sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. <sup>20</sup> If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. <sup>21</sup> It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. <sup>22</sup> Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

Oh, I say to you all, young and old, be careful that you don't use the pretense of “freedom” to walk back into the enslaving practices of before.

As Peter said it, 1 Peter 4:3 “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.”

The sins that Peter mentions in this text are worth noting:

He speaks of the sins we commit with our physical bodies.

And the words speak of a reckless abandon;

Involving oneself in lewd, lustful, cravings of sex and drink and of the parties that lure us with the same cravings.

Listen to the Apostle Paul: NASB 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> **And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.**

Peter says, “Remember!”

This is what your life was like, or could have been, but not now!

See that sin for what it is – a powerful evil force that will take you down.



Pastor Dan Luebcke was in New Orleans this past week.  
He corroborates what many of you know.

The very name “Bourbon Street” has a titillating ring to it.  
It appeals to the very lustful ideas of which Peter speaks.  
But like the same in Las Vegas, it takes very little time  
before you begin to feel the snare, and then, by God’s  
grace, realize how repugnant to God and his people such  
activities are.

Peter says remember **that** when you are ridiculed for righteousness.  
You’ve already made a resolve to be done with that sin and to  
follow Jesus.

So what counsel does Peter give when we suffer for being Christian?  
He tells us to remember the past – the decision you have  
already made and the despicable nature of those sins of the  
flesh.

## **II. But he not only tells us to think about the past, he also tells us to think about the future.**

He writes that it is true (**verse 4**) **“They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.**

Those who would pressure you to conform are irritated that you won’t go along with them and they ridicule you or worse.

So when that happens what are we to think about?  
We are to bear two truths in mind:

The first is in **verse 5** **“But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”**

Do you believe that?

To put it more bluntly, though you may not approve the methods, do you believe the message of these who spent time in Miami Beach this past year?

These are pictures (below) of men and women in active dialog with people on the street while the “witnesses” are wearing signs with the following slogans: “Repent or Perish,” “Fear God.” and “God’s Love is Conditional.”)

The words look and sound shocking in our culture, don’t they?

But listen to Jesus.

Matthew 18:31-45 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.<sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world...’<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...

Or picture in your mind’s eye the scene in Revelation 20:11-15 “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.<sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.<sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.<sup>15</sup> If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

In this life, it looks too often as if evil wins because it so often does.

That problem is as old as Scripture.

Job wrestled with it.

David asked why the wicked prosper.

Jesus’ disciples were puzzled by it.

But the Bible says, Galatians 6:7-8 “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. <sup>8</sup> The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

God asks us to believe him about a future that we can't see.

There is coming a day when evil will be judged and punished.

This is to me an interesting statement to introduce here.

It has two sides to it.

Those who do evil will be judged; you can count on it.

As we saw last week from the verses just before these, justice will prevail and obedience to Jesus will be vindicated with Jesus.

But the other side of this is the warning to us.

In Evangelicalism today we decry those old-fashioned churches that preached “hellfire and brimstone.”

Now it is only “love” that we preach.

To be sure either judgment or love without the other is no gospel at all but our evangelical sub-culture has clearly gone over to only half a truth.

But a realistic perspective is called for and that realism includes judgment.

May we always remember: Behavior has consequences!!

John Stott wrote, “To live, work and witness in conscious anticipation of Christ’s (second-coming) and judgment is a wholesome stimulus to

**faithfulness.** (J.R.W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian: Applying God’s Word to Today’s World*, 373)

But Peter says there is something else I want you to bear in mind **about the future.**

1 Peter 4:6 “For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

This is another difficult verse but in context I think we can rightly paraphrase it loosely this way:

“Because there is a certain judgment awaiting sinners, as verse 5 states, the gospel was preached, even to your friends and loved ones who are now dead so that even though, while they were alive, they were judged and mistreated according to the standards of evil men, they now live in the spirit according to the will of God.”

Just as in our day, so then, bad guys seemed too often to win.

Peter has assured his readers that evildoers will be judged in the end.

But that still leaves the question about the Christians who have already died.

When death comes it looks exactly the same for the believer as the unbeliever – the body dies and is buried. It appears to be the end.

It appears that those believers who have died are simply collateral damage.

It is reasonable to ask what difference does it make if I follow Christ if we all end up the same – dead!

Peter says oh you must know that while evil unbelievers will be judged those who have died in Christ are alive.

It seems to me that Peter is here giving the same comfort that Paul gave to the Thessalonians: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup> According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud

command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage each other with these words.

In the face of the discouragement of suffering because of your Christian faith, Peter says **remember the past** and **bear in mind the future**.

**As to the past** – you have already made a decision to break with sin – by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, keep on living out that decision.

**As to the future** – know that sin will be judged and the righteous, even the righteous who suffer, will live.

It will be worth it all.

But before I leave this subject this morning, I have a word for those here who are not following Jesus.

I want you to hear the words of a song from 250 years ago that capture the truth of that awful coming judgment but also capture the truth of the offer of the very present grace-filled gospel:

And will the Judge descend,  
and must the dead arise  
And not a single soul escape  
His all discerning eyes?

And from His righteous lips  
Shall this dread sentence sound  
And through the numerous guilty throng  
Spread black despair around:

“Depart from Me, accursed,  
To everlasting flame,  
For rebel angels first prepared,  
Where mercy never came”?

How will my heart endure

The terrors of that day  
When earth and Heav'n before His face  
Astonished shrink away?

But ere that trumpet shakes  
The mansions of the dead,  
Hark from the Gospel's cheering sound  
What joyful tidings spread:

Ye sinners, seek His grace  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of His cross  
And find salvation there.

"And will the Judge Descent" Words: Philip Doddridge, published posthumously in *Hymns Founded on Various Texts in the Holy Scripture*. By the Late Reverend Philip Doddridge, D. D., by Job Orton (J. Ed-  
dowes & J. Cotton: 1755).



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## Other Notes:

1 Peter 4:1-6

The emphasis here is not on the positive holy living but the negative breaking from past sins. This is emphasized by the naming of some sins (v3) and by the judgment announced on those who do them (v5).

In context, 3:13-17 (not 3:18-22) or just 3:18, precedes 4:1-6  
 In thought it is the suffering of Christ not his exaltation that is continued here in 4:1-6

- 2:11-12 As God's holy people, live good lives  
 2:13-3:12 Governors, Masters, Husbands, Others  
 3:13-17 Do good even if you suffer  
 3:18-22 (Remember Christ's victory)  
 4:1-6 Christ's suffering and our suffering

In this passage several ideas are juxtaposed:

- Make up your mind to be faithful in spite of opposition. (A change of mind and life (repentance) and a trust in God – Christ 2:23 “he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.
- Be done with those past behaviors and start doing the will of God. (Put off and put on – a clean break from the past.)
- Remember the judgment that awaits those who do those things and who oppose God (by opposing you). Judgment is real; it is coming and God will show no favoritism. Romans 2:6-11 “God “will give to each person according to what he has done.” <sup>7</sup> To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. <sup>8</sup> But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. <sup>9</sup> There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; <sup>10</sup> but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. <sup>11</sup> For God does not show favoritism.
- And also remember that those who have already died in the faith may have been opposed while living but they are with God now. (and that promise holds true for me as well.)

**4:1 “Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude,**

3:18-22 is a parenthesis in the flow of the letter.

4:1 takes links up with 3:14 “But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 3:17 “It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Since you are facing suffering in your own experience, arm yourself with the same attitude/resolve/purpose, thought Christ had since he too suffered in the flesh. (Follow his example.)

It also takes us back to 2:21 “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”



It must also be pointed out that the theme of the whole letter is about present suffering (prior to death) and how to respond to it. And this text is not about dying but about living THEREFORE the suffering here is suffering – partially reflected in what the readers were going through.

“Arm yourself” is a military metaphor similar to 1:13 “Therefore, prepare your minds for action. In both cases it is a conscious decision hence the “attitude” or “purpose” or “resolve.” **1b “because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.**

Is “he” Christ or Christians? - It is decided by 4:2 – it is Christians.

This clause is simply a description of the attitude of Jesus – He wouldn’t sin even though he suffered unjustly for righteousness.

Those who have suffered unjustly for the faith have demonstrated their break with sin. (Grudem, 166 and Jobes, 265)

Christ demonstrated his unwillingness to yield to sin by his faithfulness even through suffering (conversely his conviction, resolve, attitude to obey in spite of suffering).

Likewise one who suffers unjustly for his faith has shown that he is unwilling to let sin control him – he is done with sin, making a clean break from it.

For a description of “done with sin” we go to v2 – does not and does... (The “put off and put on” of Paul)

**<sup>2</sup> As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.**

“As a result” or NASB “so as”

Life divided into two parts – BC Before Christ and AD Year of our Lord.

We are to no longer be motivated by sinful desires but by the will of God.

1 Peter 1:14-15 <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

<sup>15</sup> But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do;

The rest of your life on earth is not lived according to evil human desires (evil impulses toward coveting, lusting, etc).

1 Peter 2:11 “to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.”

Not this...but this...

1 John 2:15-17 “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

These verses are especially apropos because of v17 compared to 1 Peter 4:5

<sup>3</sup> **For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in**

“Time in the past” stands in contrast to “the rest of his earthly life.”

“enough” ironic “more than enough.”

“choose,” plan, will, decide - willful choice to do wrong.

“living” – walking around in – your customary lifestyle

**“debauchery”** – sensuality, lewdness. Romans 13:13 “aselgeiais”

acts of abandon – lacking moral constraint – Mardi Gras, Office

Christmas parties, Bachelor parties, Nightclub acts,

**“lust”** – “epithumia” - all human impulses that tend toward

immorality. Probably mostly toward sexual sins in this context.

coveting, craving, lusting

**drunkenness**, Drunkenness

**orgies**, feasts

**carousing** (drinking parties)

**and detestable (licentious) idolatry.** Wanton, utterly inappropriate, repugnant to God.

First century people didn’t care that Christians wanted to worship Jesus but they objected when Christians claimed Jesus was the exclusive God implicitly labeling other religions false.

The same is true today – you can believe in Jesus if you want, just don’t imply that Jesus is the only way.

Romans 13:13-14 “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, (food and drink)

not in sexual immorality and debauchery, (sexual immorality)  
 not in dissension and jealousy. (selfish ambition)

<sup>14</sup> Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

V14 uses the same general term (“desires” used in 1 Peter 4:2) to cover all the preceding.

**<sup>4</sup> They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.**

“They” must be the pagans, the Gentiles, the unbelievers who practice those God-defying things.

“Think it strange” – they are surprised because you used to act these ways and now you don’t.

We ought to live in ways that the society in general will think of as good. 3:13 “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But when the culture and specifically friends and acquaintances around us encourage us to indulge in practices that are contrary to the will of God for our lives and for our mission in the world, we must decline.

We must become as foreigners and aliens to the practices that the culture might normalize but are inconsistent with God’s word and will.

“Family members who broke ancestral traditions on the basis of their new-found faith showed an appalling lack of concern for their familial responsibilities...The exclusivity of the Christian’s religion – their arrogant refusal to take part in, or to consider valid, the worship of any God but their own – deeply wounded public sensibilities.” (J.M.G. Barclay in Jobes, 269)

These believers were passing judgment on the others just by their refusal to go along in the same excesses.

“Plunge” is literally “run with” but Peter mixes his metaphors.

Flood of dissipation – the excess to which you and they used to go. “impetuous plunge into an open sewer” (Michaels, 233)

“heap abuse” is from same Greek word from which we get blaspheme (treat with irreverence).

They implicitly blaspheme God because they are opposing God’s will.

**<sup>5</sup> But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.**

“the living and the dead” means every person who has ever lived.

Same words used in Acts 10:42 and 2 Timothy 4:1.

**<sup>6</sup> For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.**

Some think that 4:6 is related to 3:19 and that it means that people get a second chance to become Christians after they die.

First of all 3:19 says it is Christ that preaches.

4:6 says that Christ is what is preached (the gospel).

3:19 says Christ proclaimed which a different word from 4:6 which means evangelize.

But most strikingly is the context that determines the issue (as in most cases): The point of 4:4-5 is that those who oppose God’s people (and hence, God) will be judged NOT that they will be given the gospel.

When 4:6 says, “For this is the reason...” it would make utter nonsense to say the relief of 4:6 (gospel and “live according to the Spirit” were the outcomes of judgment.

NASB “that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God*.”

Michaels: “So that even though condemned in the flesh among people generally, they might live before God in the Spirit.”

“The Christian dead may have indeed been found wanting, whether by popular opinion or by official action. Nevertheless, judged by God’s standards, they are alive in the eternal realm of the Spirit.” (Jobes, 271)

Jonathan Edwards 1740s  
Excerpts from "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

**"Their foot shall slide in due time.--**

Deuteronomy 32:35

In this verse is threatened the vengeance of God on the wicked unbelieving Israelites, who were God's visible people, and who lived under the means of grace; but who, notwithstanding all God's wonderful works towards them, remained (as vers 28.) void of counsel, having no understanding in them. Under all the cultivations of heaven, they brought forth bitter and poisonous fruit..."

The observation from the words that I would now insist upon is this. -- "There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God." -- By the **mere** pleasure of God, I mean his **sovereign** pleasure, his arbitrary will, restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment...

So that, thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God, over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out: and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God...

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is

of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking his pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell...

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God. Many are daily coming from the east, west, north and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state, with their hearts filled with love to him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! To see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of the people at Suffield, where they are flocking from day to day to Christ?

...Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ, now awake and fly from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over a great part of this congregation. Let every one fly out of Sodom: "Haste and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed."