

Living Righteous in a Hostile World: Arm Yourself (Part 2)

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[0:00] 1 Peter chapter 4.

Finish up something started this morning. Kind of unusual to do it this way, but want to make room for something a little different next Sunday and the next several Sundays.

So we'll finish this up. Let me read the text. 1 Peter chapter 4 verses 1 through 6. 1 Peter chapter 5. According to God in the Spirit.

All right. Now, we'll do a little bit of review just very quickly. Name the couple of points made this morning. Peter says, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh.

[1:51] He says, since he did that, arm yourselves. That's the key to this entire text. Or that is the thing we need to know so that we can apply everything that Peter says in these verses.

Arm yourselves. And he's about to give us all that we need. And to again remind you that this is a very rare word. It's interesting and always interesting when you're studying the Bible and come across a word that appears nowhere else in the New Testament.

You ought to pay close attention to that. Now, you'd have to get just the right commentary to let you know that. But they're available out there. And so in your study of God's word, pay close attention to words that are unique or rare.

And this is a rare word. And it is a military term, which makes it even more interesting, I think.

Although that's not, as I mentioned this morning, an unusual thing to find in the New Testament.

The New Testament writers quite often, especially Peter and Paul, and they wrote a good bit of the New Testament. They quite often use terms that come right out of the secular world and specifically out of the military world.

[3:09] And so it's interesting. And it means to do what you suspect. I mean, it's not some obscure meaning. It means to arm yourselves with weapons.

Literally. With weapons. Weapons of warfare. And I suggested this morning that we could say Christians, weaponize yourselves. And I know that sounds very kind of violent almost.

I mean, to think of arming ourselves with weapons. And how could this have anything to do with the spiritual teaching that Peter's giving us? And yet we understand that we're not literally being exhorted to take up arms against our persecutors.

That's not it. We're not to get out a shotgun and first person that looks cross at us because we're Christians were to blow their heads off. No, not at all. We're not to weaponize ourselves in the traditional sense of the term.

But in the context of the passage, in the larger passage, and rather than going back and reading all of that again, let me just put it in this one statement. Peter is saying, those of you, and he's speaking to you and me, those of you who are born again.

[4:23] Those of you who have benefited from Christ's atoning death, and that's what he's been talking about. Christ suffered for us in the flesh. Those of you who have benefited from that, his atoning death, you must arm yourselves for the persecution that will surely follow.

And the level of that persecution, of course, is going to be determined by the will of God for you. Possibly none of us in this room here tonight are going to die the death of a martyr because of our faith in Christ.

And yet God might will that for you. And if he does, then you will. Okay? And so here's the point. Arm yourself. Arm yourself for that.

Not arm yourself against it because no amount of armor that Peter could mention here or that God might provide for us is going to somehow keep us from any persecution.

But the armor, the weaponry that we need is so that we can endure that persecution and victory. And so arm yourselves.

[5:34] And then after the command, and it is a command. It's the only imperative in the entire paragraph. So that's how you know this is the key thought. After the command comes the description, a description of the armor, as I've said.

And I believe we can identify pretty clearly at least four. Some would split it up and say there are five. But I think four clear references to the, quote, armor that we need to suit up with or weaponry we need to take up and use.

All right? The first weapon, again, by way of review, the first weapon we must arm ourselves with is one of purpose. One of purpose.

Listen, this is so key. So key. And we're to suffer with our Savior. That is, suffer with His same purpose.

And again, to remind you, Peter began here with an example. Clear example. Christ suffered for us in the flesh. And he did that for something more important than just simply an example.

[6:51] But it is an example. And Peter's using it in that sense. So he gives the example. Christ suffered for us in the flesh. And then he, from the example, issues an exhortation to us.

And he says, arm yourselves also. With what? The same mind. Now, not every version has it that way.

I cannot remember what the New American Standard says. No, the ESV says, with the same way of thinking. And that's the idea. Or the same mind. The same mind that Christ had when He suffered.

But literally, the real meaning and thrust of the word, this word mind or thinking, is purpose. It's one of purpose.

And so, Jesus went to the cross, suffered and died. And He went there armed with a purpose.

That's what He's saying. And that purpose, of course, is to fulfill the divine plan of redemption.

[7:52] Jesus went to the cross with that purpose. And that's what compelled Him. And that's what, like in the Luke passage, why He set His face toward Jerusalem and the cross.

Because He was compelled by purpose to redeem you and me. And so, Peter's saying, we too, also, are to be armed with that same purpose.

Not purpose to go to a cross and die on a cross. But the purpose of redemption. The redemption of lost sinners to Christ. And added to that to suffer and die if necessary.

That's part of the purpose. And, of course, our level of suffering could scarcely be compared to the level of Christ's suffering.

It could scarcely be compared to much of the suffering that is going on with Christians in many different parts of this world today.

[8:54] And yet, we do suffer and should expect and should go to share the gospel with this purpose. That we're going to suffer with our Savior. No matter what that suffering might be.

And our reason for it is for the redemption of lost sinners. That's weapon number one. Weapon number two pertains to purity. Again, let me remind you.

And in verses 1 to 3, we looked at that this morning. And the gist of it is, if you're going to obey the Great Commission. And arm yourselves for whatever God might allow to come into your life as a result.

Then, first of all, forsake your sin resolutely. Forsake your sin resolutely. You're to arm yourself with this. Verse 1, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

That is, if you are trusting God enough to suffer for doing what He has commanded. If you are willing to do that, trusting God with that, then it reveals something about you.

[10:01] It reveals that you have made a resolute break from the power of sin. And that power being allowed to operate in your life.

Then we're to forsake our sin. So forsake our sin resolutely. Then fight your sin victoriously. Verse 2, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

We're to live for the will of God. That's how you fight your sin victoriously. And then third, face your sin specifically. And he says, for we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of unbelievers.

We spent enough of our time with that. And then he lists, of course, several of those. And as I said this morning, Peter really is saying quite clearly, enough is enough.

Enough of this sin. Don't do it anymore. And so arm yourselves with this thought. The time you've spent sinning in your past life without Christ is enough. Make a break from your sin.

[11:05] Do the will of God. And suffer for it if God so wills it. And so this is our armor. And so weaponize yourselves with purpose.

Suffer with your Savior. Weaponize yourself with purity. Separate yourself from sin. And then now we're ready for the remaining two elements.

Four elements. The third pertains to patience. Pertains to patience. And here is the armor.

Submit to your sovereign. Your sovereign God. Submit to your sovereign God.

Now, this is rather interesting. What he says here is focus now turns to our persecutors. And notice again what he says there in verses 4 and 5.

[12:02] In regard to these, they think it's strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you or maligning you. They will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

And for this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead. That is dead now. That they might be judged according to men in the flesh. But live according to God in the spirit.

Now, the focus here is on the persecutor. And the armor that we're putting on, this third element of armor, is what we do about them.

Or maybe more specifically, what we are not to do about them. What we're to leave to God to do.

And that's the whole idea here as he describes this.

You see, if it is God's will that you suffer for Christ. Suffer as a Christian. Suffer persecution because you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13:04] And you are not ashamed to proclaim the good news. If you suffer for that. And one day you might even suffer death. Then, here's what you need to do.

You need to arm yourself with patience. Vengeance. Not retaliation. Not retaliation. You see, this is the point. God does not allow us to seek personal vengeance against our persecutors.

He doesn't allow us to do that. But you say that's not fair. Right? You do say that, don't you? Oh, come on. You say it, don't you?

Okay. That's not fair. You say, I have my rights too, you know. Right? Do you? Well, let me ask you something.

The Bible calls for us to die to self. Last time I checked, dead people have no rights whatsoever.

Now, in case you misunderstand me, if in the course of persecution, someone persecutes you because of your faith, if in the course of that someone breaks the law of the land, then, of course, you have a legal recourse that's available to you.

[14:19] I'm not putting that aside, and Peter's not either. But we're not talking about that so much. We're talking about persecution that lies within the bounds of the law. I mean, they're allowed to laugh at you and ridicule you.

And though it may be illegal, sometimes it's easy for an employer, say, to get away with passing you by because you're one of those, quote, religious people or Christians and other forms of persecution.

The point is, what do we do about all that other? We don't have the right to take personal vengeance. This is what Peter is saying. And we do have recourse according to the law, but all the other, we've got to just let that happen.

We do. And you say, that's not fair. Or at least it doesn't seem fair. Well, that's why we need to arm ourselves with patience.

That is, in this sense, to submit, totally submit, totally turn over to God this desire for vengeance and retaliation and retribution.

[15:31] Our desire to exact justice ourselves. We're to submit that. To whom? To God. Our sovereign God.

And He will take care of it. Do you see how this is a point or a thing of armor for us? When we go out, whether it's here in Bartlesville, knock on somebody's door, not knowing how they will react to the sharing of the gospel, or whether you go to some foreign country where you know at least the government is hostile to biblical Christianity.

Do you see how this is an armor? You say, well, you know, I don't see how because they might kill me and that armor didn't work, did it? Well, you're not understanding what the armor is. The armor is that we're submitting to the sovereignty of God. God's sovereign. And He's the judge. The ultimate judge. And He will take care of it. And it's interesting here how this plays out, how He describes this.

And there are three things I want you to notice here. How He conveys this idea to us. First of all, He's talking about these Gentiles, or these unbelievers, and He speaks first of their surprised reaction toward us.

[17:00] That's where it begins. And some of you have experienced this, exactly how it's described here. In verse 4, He says, in regard to these, that is the Gentiles in verse 3, they think it's strange.

Have you experienced that? Especially some of you, maybe who came to faith later on in life, and you had friends prior to your conversion.

Unbelieving friends. And when you came to Christ, those friends remained unbelievers. Those friends you used to run around with, you used to spend time with, you used to have conversations with, and conversations that were not, of course, edifying and honorable to the Lord.

And maybe you did other things with these friends. And they're still out there, living the way they lived. Probably, possibly, you have experienced them expressing to you that, man, something strange happened to you.

And they don't say it, and mean it, in kind of a nonchalant, kind of, you know, you know, this is interesting, something's happening. Now, the idea here is that you're some kind of alien.

[18:14] I mean, this makes no sense to me at all. You don't do the things you used to do. And want to go the places you used to go, that we used to go together. In fact, I have known over the years in my ministry some examples of that within a husband and wife relationship, where the wife became a born-again believer.

Of course, this is not unusual, but the husband remains an unsaved man. And so, from that point on, the wife doesn't enjoy doing some of the things that she used to do, she and her husband used to do together.

And it causes some trouble. You understand this point of persecution, or this scenario. And this is what Peter's describing. They say, they think it's strange, it's alien, it's foreign.

And what do they find strange? Or alien? Well, read on there. That you do not run with them.

I like the way this is worded. That you do not run with them in the same flood. And here's quite an expression. Flood of dissipation. That's the New King James Version, although the other versions don't change it much.

[19:31] But what does this mean? It's interesting. Very interesting. The word dissipation is the word asotia. Now, what's that?

Well, it has a prefix on the front. The word a or alpha. And it's a negative, just like it is in the English. It's a negative, and so what it's attached to, it becomes a negative.

Non or un. And the word sotia means saved. It's the word for saved. We get our word soteriology, the doctrine of salvation.

Or sotirios in the Greek means salvation. You say, well, so what? How's that interesting? Well, because if you could translate it this way, unsavedness.

This is it. They're saying, you used to run around with us. And now, you don't run around with those people in the same outpouring, overflowing of unsavedness.

[20:40] And that's just kind of a carte blanche term that includes all kinds of activity that unbelievers involve themselves in.

And you used to do that kind of stuff, and now you don't. And they say, this is strange. It's alien. It's foreign. The apostle Paul, matter of fact, you might remember the story in Acts.

They're on Mars Hill. Paul is there in Athens, and he preaches. And this is what they said. In fact, the word that Peter uses is found right here.

In Acts 17, verse 19, and they took him and brought him to the Aragapis. Now, let me start with 18. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him.

That's Paul. And some said, what does this babbler want to say? What does he want to say?

Others said, he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods.

[21:42] Foreign gods. That's our word here. Foreign. Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. Strange. Strange.

And so, here are the unbelievers. They're saying to these now believers who are reading Paul's letter, they're saying, you used to run around with us. Something strange has happened. Something alien has happened to you. And now you don't want to go on with our unsavedness. Unsavedness. John Phillips translated it this way.

He said, they will find it strange that you do not wallow along with them in the muck. That's just, only an Englishman could say it that way. But the point is, they will not only, and here's the real point, they will not only find your behavior as a saved person, as a Christian, they will not only find it alien or bizarre, whatever term you want to use, but they also find it threatening.

Threatening. And you know this to be true, don't you? Especially if you work out in the secular world, and nearly all of you do. It's not enough that they think you're strange.

[23:01] It is that many of them think you're a threat. A threat. And I guarantee you, there is a large portion of our population here in America, a growing number of our population, who think that Christians are a threat to our society.

And must be dealt with. Must be squelched. And where do we begin? We begin taking their rights away from them. And so forth. I guarantee you.

But on the personal level, you know that there are those that you have encountered in your life, workplace, or wherever. But not only think you, you know, you're from Mars because of your Christianity.

Because they don't have any idea. They don't understand it at all. But somehow you threaten them. I can tell you with no uncertainty that Matthew, our son, experienced this same thing.

In basic training, and really all of his time in his deployments, there are soldiers that he works alongside of who think, they think he is one strange boy.

[24:09] He doesn't look at pornography, doesn't tell dirty jokes, doesn't use coarse language, doesn't drink. They think he's some weirdo, but some of them ill-treat him because he poses a threat to them in some sense.

In the apocryphal book, and I don't always, well, let me, let me back up here a minute because I'm jumping to the second point here. So we now have a surprised reaction, but now we move to a slanderous response.

And this is what happens at the end of verse 4. Speaking evil of you. Let's put all that together here. And then let me make a point about this phrase, speaking evil of you.

In verse 6, for this reason the gospel, excuse me, not verse 6, verse 4, in regard to these, they think it's strange that you do not run with them in the same outpouring of unsavedness.

And I'm just translating it that way. But, speaking evil of you. So here's my point again.

[25:22] It's not enough that they think you're strange, but they have to malign you because you're a threat to them. And by the way, speaking evil of you, that's four words in the English.

But in the Greek text, there's just one word. We have to have four words to translate the one word. And the word is blasphemo. We get our word blaspheme.

Blaspheme. Blasphemeo is actually the word. And so they're actually blaspheming us. Now, it's unclear whether Peter's point is that they're actually directly blaspheming the believer or blaspheming his or her God.

But I think both are easily fit there. Evil speaking. Speaking evil or maligning you. Now, the apocryphal book, Wisdom of Solomon, and I don't always quote from the apocryphal books.

Okay? They're not inspired. So this is not the word of God I'm going to quote to you. And yet, some of what's written in these apocryphal books are instructive to us and interesting and illustrative.

[26:32] And in this book, Wisdom of Solomon, it was written, by the way, before the time of Christ. The author of the book, whomever he may have been, cites the words of the wicked against the good life of the righteous person.

And it's interesting how it's worded. This is what the unrighteous person, the wicked say. They say, let us lie in wait for the righteous man because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions.

He reproaches us for our sins against the law and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and calls himself a child of the Lord.

He became to us a reproof of our thoughts. The very sight of him is a burden to us because his manner of life is unlike that of others and his ways are strange.

We are considered by him as something base and he avoids our ways as unclean. He calls the last end of the righteous happy and boasts that God is his Father.

[27:43] Let us see if his words are true and let us test what will happen at the end of his life. For if the righteous man is God's Son, he will help him.

He will help him and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture that we may find out how gentle he is and make trial of his forbearance.

Let us condemn him to a shameful death for according to what he says he will be protected. And that kind of conveys the mentality of the wicked as they relate to or go against the righteous.

It's not enough that they think we're strange. Alien for it. We are a threat to them. And so, hence comes the persecution.

Alright, now, we're working our way, though, through what Paul has written about our persecutors. Okay? And now we're going to see, and I think very clearly as we bring this part of it to a close, we're going to see very clearly how patience becomes a very valuable part of our armor.

[29:04] And we've seen their surprise reaction, the slanderous response, and we want to say, yeah, what are we going to do about them? And so then we see, third, their sure retribution.

Their sure retribution. What does he say in verse 5? They will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. See, when it comes to retribution, retaliation, judgment, we must submit to our sovereign about that.

He will take care of it. And, by the way, he will do so, according to Peter, either in life or after death. But, they will not escape.

Will not escape. You know, those who persecute and cause Christians to suffer, those that are mean to them and hurt them physically as well as mentally, many times they escape any kind of judgment of man, any judgment here.

And it seems like they live their entire lives hostile toward Christianity and yet not suffering one bit for their hostility. and so you might be led to think, well, God, you know, He just let them pass.

[30:27] But, God is not letting them by. And so, we don't have to take on the duty ourselves and take care of our persecutors ourselves because it seems like God is not going to.

He will. That's why Peter says, in life and in death they will not escape. Do you remember chapter 2 of 1 Peter?

We studied it a long, long time ago and just to refresh your memory, let me read a portion of it.

Chapter 2 verse 19. For this is commendable if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering, wrongfully.

For what credit is it if when you are beaten for your faults you take it patiently. But here's the point. But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.

For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that you should follow his steps. Who committed no sin, Jesus committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth, who when he was reviled did not revile in return.

[31:42] When he suffered, he did not threaten, but what did he do? And this is the key. Verse 23, but committed himself to him who judges righteously.

That is, to the Father. He will judge. And we are to submit ourselves to him as well. This is part of our armor. Submit to God the Father who judges righteously.

So, arm yourselves with purpose, suffer with your Savior. With purity, separate from your sinfulness. With patience, submit it all to your sovereign, your sovereign God.

And then one more very quickly, the final aspect of our armor pertains to promise. Promise. Stand secure in your salvation.

Stand secure in your salvation. That is, salvation in the ultimate sense. You're secure and you ought to stand in your salvation in the present sense, but there is the ultimate sense and that is our full and final completed salvation when we leave this place and we go to be with the Lord in heaven.

[33:05] stand secure in that salvation, eternal life. Verse 6, For this reason, the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit.

Now, this is kind of a complicated verse of Scripture to understand. Let's just pick it apart real quick. He said, For this reason, the gospel was preached.

For what reason? Why was it preached? To save the people he was talking about in the last few verses. Those who are unbelievers so that they will not come into judgment.

For this reason, it was preached. For this reason, the gospel was preached also to those who are dead. Now, who are they?

Are we talking about as some have believed? He's talking about when Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison, those who are dead, and so he's giving them maybe a second chance in hell? [34:15] No. No. The idea here is those who are now dead. Not dead when they heard the gospel, but they're now dead.

And not that they were dead when they heard it. They're dead now. Now, here's the point. that they might be judged according to men in the flesh.

That is, men judged a certain thing about them while they were alive, but they live now according to God in the Spirit.

You say, well, what's the deal here? See, the point is, the persecutors of these Christians that Peter was writing to, these persecutors were saying to them, you say you have the good news.

You keep telling me about it. You say that you have escaped death, judgment, and you say in this, quote, gospel of yours, that God is great and that he saves you.

[35:25] That's what you're telling me. Well, you're missing out on all the fun in life, all the parties and such. Because if you die and go to the worms, and we die and go to the worms, then what's the difference?

And so we say, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we all die. See, this was the objection that the persecutors were leveling at these Christians.

You say all of these things, but you're going to die, just like I'm going to die, and that's going to be the end of it. And you say you've escaped this death and you have eternal life, but I know of your friends, you know, so and so who died last week, and he's dead, his Christianity didn't help him.

That's the point here that Peter's making. But here is our armor against that. The armor is that the gospel was not preached in vain to our dead loved ones, our dead brothers and sisters in Christ. It wasn't preached in vain to them. When Christians die, it may seem that they are being judged like everybody else, but they're not. They're alive.

[36:46] They're more alive now than they were when they were here in the flesh. They're alive and they're with the Lord. This is our armor.

And it's an armor of promise because we too stand secure in that salvation. That yeah, we may die, may come to the end of it, but that's not the end of it for us because we stand secure in our salvation that is eternal.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 8.17? He said, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, shall be out there in the future sometime.

We stand secure in that. These things, if you think about them, and I hope you do, and apply them to your life, do they not represent real, true armor for us as we go forward not only in our Christian faith and living out that faith, but also in our Christian witness as we fulfill, obey the great commission to know all of these things as we head out, that our purpose is the same as Christ, the same as His, to redeem a lost world.

And all the time, if I mention the last one, we're standing secure, no matter what happens to us, we're secure, our salvation is secure, no matter what others might do to us and to our bodies.

[38:26] And though they may be burned and destroyed, and whatever else they might do to us, we stand secure. This is the armor that we're to arm ourselves with.

Amen and Amen. Thank you.