

Living Righteous in a Hostile World: Arm Yourselves (Part 1)

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[0:00] 1 Peter 4 1 Peter 4 1 Peter 4 1 Peter 4 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves.

That's what you ought to underline there. Arm yourselves also with the same mind. For he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

That he no longer should live the rest of his life in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles.

When we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

2 Peter 5 They will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead.

[1:41] That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit. Alright? Now, this is the last Sunday of September.

And next month we're going to be launching into a month of missions. The emphasis will be missions throughout the month of October.

And each of the Sundays, the five Sundays, we're going to be considering this theme. Go. Just simply that. Go. As Acts 1.8 says, To Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, to the ends of the earth. And next Sunday I'm going to be laying all that out for you.

Our strategy for the months and years to come. And we'll start that next Sunday. But this particular passage in 1 Peter chapter 4 helps us introduce that, really, in many ways.

[2:53] And the Great Commission, by the way, assumes this reality. Persecution. It does. There's no way to get around that.

And the Great Commission has this one imperative. And it is to make disciples. That's what Jesus said in Matthew 28.19.

There's the imperative. Make disciples. That is, make disciples of Christ. But for us to obey that divine imperative, that command, that commission, we must do what?

We must go. We must go. There's no way around that. Jesus said in Matthew 28.19, Go, therefore, and make disciples.

That is, to make followers of Christ. Christ. And He said to go where? To all the nations. And the word nations is the word *ethnos* in the Greek language.

[3:55] We get our word *ethnic* from it. And so you understand what He's talking about. He's talking about all peoples. That is, all ethnics. All people groups. We're to go to them. And what are we to do?

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

That's the Great Commission. And we're very familiar with that passage. Now then, let me go back to something I said just a moment ago. The Great Commission presupposes and assumes persecution.

And we understand that according to the record of Scripture. It's very clear in the Bible. We also understand that according to the historical record of the Christian church over the years.

The Great Commission assumes the reality of persecution. There's no way to avoid that. No way to get around that. It is a given that those who obey that commission will, to some extent or another,

and according to the will of God, will suffer for it.

[5:03] They will, even here, in this so-called Christian nation. I'm not so sure it's as Christian as it once was.

And it is growing less Christian as the days and years go by. But persecution is happening right here. Before Jesus gave His commission that I quoted just a moment ago, He gave that commission to His disciples and through them He gave it to us.

But before He gave that to them in Matthew 28, He predicted in Matthew chapter 24 what would happen to them if they obeyed it. And He said, You will be hated by all nations.

That is, all people groups. Those people you're supposed to go to. They're going to hate you. And He said, They're going to hate you for my name's sake. For my name's sake. Years later, the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to the young pastor named Timothy.

And he said in chapter 1, verse 8, Share with me in the sufferings of the gospel according to the power of God. He said, Timothy, share with me in this.

[6:11] This suffering that comes with the Great Commission. And again in chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, in verse 3, He said, You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

And we need to understand that as well for us. And then again in chapter 4, verse 5 in 2 Timothy, He said, Endure afflictions.

Endure it. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. And so over and over again, Not just in these passages that I've referred to, But many of the places we could see in the Bible, We see that the Great Commission assumes persecution.

There's no way around it. It is a given. Whether it is in Colorado, And our association is starting a partnership with Colorado. You'll hear more about that later.

Whether the persecution comes as we are going to Colorado, And the New Age influence of many of those who live there.

[7:18] Or whether it's in Utah and Idaho, And the influence in the opposition of the Mormons. Or whether it is in Ukraine, And the opposition there is primarily from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Or whether it is in China, And of course communism. Or here, In Bartlesville. And so in light of this reality, As Christians, We should be, Or rather, What should be our course of action?

This being a given. Persecution as a result of obeying the Great Commission. What should be our course of action? Should it be to opt out, Because we really don't like disagreeable people?

You know? Or disagreeable situations? Is it to remain silent about our faith, About the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Because we dislike confrontation?

Or rejection? Is it to avoid overt evangelism in places like China, And Malawi, And Ukraine, And Colorado, And Utah, And Idaho, Because the heat is too high in those places for Christians, The threat of persecution is too great?

[8:30] Should that be our course of action? Well, obviously not. What should it be then? Well, Looking at this text in 1 Peter, We can do, Should do, Must do, What Peter admonishes us to do.

You're saying, What is that? We can arm ourselves, Not with guns, Bombs and such, Armor or weapons of a different sort, And we'll get to that here in a minute, But if we're going to obey the Great Commission, And by the way, Obedience for us is not optional, It really isn't, Then, We must arm ourselves.

That's what Peter is talking about here in this passage. To arm ourselves. And so the key to understanding the meaning and the intent of this passage, This text is this phrase that I highlighted and told you, Might as well go ahead and underline it now.

It's this phrase, Arm yourselves. Arm yourselves. Now, what does Peter mean by that? Well, let's just consider the whole verse there, Verse 1 again. Begins with the word, Therefore, Doesn't it?

And we see, Therefore, A lot in Scripture, And we understand what it means, Certainly by now. And we understand that it's pointing back to something. And Peter's pointing back to the preceding block of thought.

[9:59] That is on into chapter 3, In verses 18 through 22, He's referring back to it. Therefore, Since all this that I've said, In chapter 3, Verses 18 through 22, Which, by the way, Begins with, Christ suffered once for sins, The just for the unjust, That He might bring us to God.

That's His purpose. Being put to death in the flesh. And it ends with this same Christ, Gone into heaven, And He's at the right hand of God. That's what He said in chapter 3.

That block of thought, Just before He gets into chapter 4, And begins it with, Therefore. And He says, Therefore, Then, In chapter 4, Verse 1, Since Christ suffered for us, And I realize that some of your versions do not have the words for us in there, But it belongs there, okay?

If not explicitly, Implicitly. Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, Arm yourselves. Now, It's interesting, That Peter used this term, Arm, Or arm yourselves.

It's a rare word. Matter of fact, It only appears right here. In 1 Peter chapter 4, Verse 1. Doesn't appear anywhere else in the Bible. Not the verbal form. But more interesting is this.

[11 : 24] The word he used, The term, Is a military term. And Peter did that quite often. And we know Paul used military terminology quite often to make a point.

And so Peter's using a military term. And it means literally to arm yourselves with weapons of warfare. That's what he's saying here.

Or we could say it this way, Christians, Weaponize yourselves. Now that sounds a bit drastic, doesn't it? But what does he mean? In the context of our passage, Peter then, Looking back at chapter 3 and what he said there, And now here in the opening verses of chapter 4, Peter is saying, Those of you who have benefited from Christ's atoning death on the cross, You must arm yourselves for the persecution that will surely follow.

That's the idea here. Now then, After the command to arm yourselves, Comes the description of the armor. And this is the main thrust of the passage and my sermon.

And I believe that we can identify four features of our armor here. Four of them. The first weapon, We might call them weapons.

[12 : 47] The first weapon that we must arm ourselves with, Is one of purpose. It's one of purpose. And we might state it this way, Suffer with your Savior.

Suffer with your Savior. That is, Suffer with the same purpose that he had. The Greek philosopher Pythagoras, Who lived 500 years before Christ, But he was a pagan, of course.

And yet he wisely concluded this. He said, This is the sum of religion. To be like him whom you worship.

And he's absolutely right about that. That's the sum of religion. Now in Christian parlance, We would speak of imitation. To imitate our Lord and Savior. To imitate him. To live as he lived.

To think as he thought. To do and teach and act as he acted. And so forth. So it's imitation. Or we might even use the word conformity.

[13 : 47] We're to conform. We're to be conformed to the very life of Christ. We might even use the word union with Christ. It falls under that great doctrine. And see, listen, This is the glory of the incarnation.

This is what makes us different than any other religion. Even the, quote, Religion of Pythagoras.

Robert Layton, The Scottish theologian of the 1600s, Put it this way.

He said, The inaccessible light of the deity Is seen in the humanity of Christ. That's the incarnation. So that, he said, We may learn from him And direct our steps From his example.

This is the only way to live. Layton said. All other ways are nothing but wandering and perishing. Darkness and misery. Therefore, Christ is presented to us In the gospel In clear and living colors.

So that our whole lives may be like him. Like him. That's what Peter's talking about. Now, in principle, We don't have any problem with that, do we?

[14 : 56] In fact, we might even be tempted to say amen. That's exactly right. We don't have any problem with this. Until we get on the subject of suffering. Alright? The suffering of Christ.

We want to imitate Christ in every other way, But, In his suffering. I mean, isn't that right? Could we admit that at least to ourselves? But what was Peter, What does Peter say here?

In verse 1. It's really very clear. Therefore, Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, Arm yourselves also with the same mind.

The same mind. Now, let's just break that down here And understand fully what Peter is saying. He said, Since Christ suffered, And he did, didn't he? Yeah, he did.

I mean, more than any man. Since Christ suffered, And he suffered what? For us. For us. He suffered vicariously.

[15 : 56] He suffered in our place. Since Christ suffered for us. And he suffered where? In the flesh. And that just means simply that he died.

He died. He was crucified. Right? Okay. Now, we know all about this, don't we? This is Christianity 101. We're well familiar with this.

But Peter's not simply teaching us some facts here. We could go back to chapter 3 in the last paragraph. And there he really is teaching us, Though he is making an application. But here in chapter 4, verse 1, He's not just teaching us some facts, Facts we already know. No, Peter is laying before us An example to follow.

Now, it's not really one we want to follow. But there it is. In Scripture. It's an example. One that we are to follow. And the clue to that appears on the very front end of the verse.

[16:59] Right after the word, therefore. I skipped it a moment ago, but it's the word, since. Do you see that? Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh.

Now, you know that the word, since, Must be followed by a then. Now, the word, then, doesn't have to appear. But it's implied. Since this, then this.

This is the idea. The word, since, always precedes some kind of result. Or some kind of point to be made. Or some kind of action to take.

Or whatever. And that's the case here. In this case, it is a response. A response that is required. And so Peter begins with an example.

Christ suffered for us in the flesh. And then Peter issues an exhortation. What's the exhortation? Arm yourselves also with the same mind.

[18:01] Same mind. Now, arm yourselves is an imperative verb. This is a command. This is a command for every one of us.

I've already discussed the verb itself. We're to weaponize ourselves. But what is our weapon? Peter says, arm yourselves with what?

The same mind. Are you with me? The same mind. That is the same mind Christ had when He suffered.

That is the same way of thinking. It's even stronger than that, really. It literally means the same purpose. The same purpose.

You see, when Jesus went to the cross, suffered and died, He went there armed with a purpose. Now, that's Jesus.

[19:09] And that's important to know. He went there armed with a purpose. And that purpose, of course, was to fulfill the divine plan of redemption. That was Peter's subject in the last chapter.

He went there with a purpose. Now, that's Jesus. What about us? Well, Peter's applying this to us. And so we cannot escape the meaning here. We are to be armed with that same purpose.

That same purpose. That is, the purpose being the redemption of lost sinners to Christ. And to suffer and die if called upon.

That's the purpose here. That we're to have, be armed with. This same purpose. You see, now listen. You need to understand this. Suffering did not just happen to Jesus.

It didn't just happen to Him. As a result of the action that He took and things He said and did. Jesus chose it. He chose it. Jesus armed Himself with it.

[20:12] This purpose. He said in John 10 and verse 18, No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own accord. And then when it came time for Him to go to Jerusalem and to fulfill that purpose and go to the cross, Luke 9.51 says that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

How resolute, you see. And here's the point. We're to be armed with that same mind when it comes to the redemption of lost man.

That same mind. That same purpose. And I'm ashamed to put it in these terms. But we are to proclaim the gospel and willingly risk being laughed at.

Hard to compare being laughed at at some point of persecution. To compare that with the suffering of Christ. And nevertheless, it's true. It's valid. We're to risk that.

We're to risk it. Armed with that. To risk being laughed at. Or ridiculed. Or have the door shut in our face. Or to be shunned by friends.

[21:25] Or ostracized by family members. Or challenged by those who are skeptics. We're to risk being rejected by those who do not believe the way we believe.

And reject the gospel out of hand. We're to risk that. We don't like that, do we? To be rejected. Or maybe, by the way, we will be called upon to risk physical abuse.

That could happen. Or maybe imprisonment. Or maybe even death. Even death. And we can do it. We can do it. We can do it.

Armed. With the same purpose of Christ. That's Peter's point. Richard Wurmbrand. A Romanian pastor who spent 14 years in prison.

Released from the power of sin. And so if you're going to, once again, come under or begin to follow and allow yourself to be under the power of sin, it's going to be your choice.

But for a believer, you're in a state, a settled state of release from the power of sin. Sin is a principle. And so, here's the idea.

The believer has been released from the power of sin and is, therefore, expected to live no longer within its sphere of influence.

[28:38] And that's a daily, daily commitment and act in our lives. And you will never choose.

Here's the idea of it being an armor for you or being weaponized. You will never, ever choose to suffer for Christ or for the cause of the gospel while you are allowing the corrupting power of sin to rule in any area of your life.

You will never choose suffering. And therefore, you will never choose to go the way of Christ with His same purpose so long as you're allowing sin to rule in any area of your life.

That's put in the negative, in the positive. On the other hand, if you are trusting God enough to suffer for doing what He has commanded, then it reveals something about you.

It reveals that you have made a resolute break from the power of sin in your life. It reveals that. It proves that.

[29:50] Forsake your sin resolutely. But under this separating from your sinfulness, there's a second thing. Not only forsake your sin resolutely, but into verse 2, fight your sin victoriously.

What does He say there in verse 2? That He no longer should live the rest of His time. That's how we know in verse 1 He's talking about making a resolute break.

That you should no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Do you want to know how to fight against sin, the temptation to sin, the allurements of sin, the influence of sin?

Do you know how to fight it victoriously? Every day, live for the will of God. You say, wouldn't it be great if I knew the will of God?

[30:56] Well, you do. You do on all those things that matter. You say, but I don't know the will of God on everything. Well, you live for the things you know. Live out the will of God in your life in those areas that you already know.

Continue to search God's Word and God will reveal more of His will to you. Live that out. That's how to live victoriously against sin.

Living victoriously against sin is not going to be something you accomplish through self-discipline. I'm just going to discipline that into my life.

I believe in spiritual discipline. I'm not saying that. But if that's your approach to saying no to sin and getting sin out of your life, I'm just going to, you know, I'm going to grit my teeth and I'm going to give it all I've got to say no to that sin.

You'll never make it. And the way you live victoriously, fight against sin victoriously, is to live out the will of God. Live it out.

[32:04] Every day. And then finally, and there are three things here under this category. Forsake your sin resolutely. See, you're arming yourself.

Arming yourself for the persecution that will come as you obey Christ. And this second armor is purity.

Forsake your sin resolutely. Fight your sin victoriously. And then the final one is to face your sin specifically. You know, when it comes to sin, you need to get down to the specifics.

I know how we pray normally. We pray for this and that and this thing and that thing and this need and that need and so forth. And then we close it with, and if I've sinned, forgive me.

Or forgive me for all of my sins. Kind of just an overall kind of statement of, God, please forgive me. And we don't really think of sin specifically.

[33:07] And confess our sins specifically. But if we're going to be armed for the Great Commission, with the same mind of Christ, then we're going to have to face the sin we struggle with every day.

We're going to have to face it specifically. Verse 3 says, For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles.

And by the way, the word Gentiles is just co-word for unbelievers. Okay? Doing the will of unbelievers. When we walk in, and then he provides a short list, and we're not going to spend a lot

of time on these, but you could take this list of sins that he mentions here and divide them into three categories.

There are sins of immorality. Two of them. Lewdness. And lusts. And I know these require some explanation, because lewdness has a different connotation possibly in our minds than it does in Peter's mind.

Or did. Lewdness just means the lack of moral restraint. Just, you know, anything goes. Morally.

[34 : 27] Or immorally. Not saying no to any of it. Just wanton immorality. In fact, by the way, and I will mention this, over in 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 7, he uses this same word in relation to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Or so that gives us an understanding of the severity, the seriousness of this sin. He says there in verse 7, and he delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked. Talking about those in Sodom and Gomorrah. Filthy conduct. That's our word here. Lewdness. Translated here in 1 Peter chapter 4.

And it just means a lack of any kind of restraint at all against morality. And then lusts.

Lusts is just speaking of the cravings of the flesh that are allowed to be satisfied, to be fulfilled. It's whatever your flesh craves.

[35 : 34] And we're not even Christians. We still have the flesh. And we crave things. Immoral things. Wrong things. Sinful things.

And so these lusts, if allowed to be expressed and to be satisfied, those are the sins. The sins of immorality.

And then there are sins of debauchery or excess. And all these sins kind of dovetail together.

They're all very extreme sins.

And so we might be tempted to say, well, none of these really apply to me. But they do. All right? At any level. But there are sins of immorality, sins of debauchery.

And he mentions three of them. Drunkenness. That is drinking to the point of getting drunk. And revelries. That's how it's translated here in the New King James Version.

[36 : 34] It means unrestrained immorality. See, it's very similar. Drinking parties. That's how it's translated here. We all have kind of an idea, vision of that.

But we're talking about excess of just getting together and just drinking and drinking and drinking. And then there are sins of idolatry. Abominable idolatries. Now, it's not necessary that we spend all of our time or any great portion of our time looking down into the nitty gritty and details of all these sins.

These are sins. But he's just listing some of them. But the point is what he said as he introduced these sins. And it's really quite interesting. Peter puts it this way.

And I'll just put it in colloquial terms. Paraphrase it. This is what he said. Enough with the sin. That's what he's saying. Enough with it.

Stop doing it. Don't do it anymore. That's what he's saying. And so, suffering for doing the will of God, if he so wills it.

[37 : 46] Suffer if you will. But don't sin anymore. Don't sin. I like John Piper's commentary in verse 2. And he put it this way.

He said, arm yourselves with this thought. Any amount of past sinning is enough. Any amount. If you sinned a little before you were converted, it's enough.

And that applies to some of us here. You know, I was saved when I was young. And, yeah, I didn't get off into all kinds of sins and drinking and drunkenness and all this kind of stuff.

But what I sinned was enough. And there might be those who would say, well, you know, I've got friends that have really lived. And I'd like to live a little before I come to Christ.

Ridiculous. Peter says it's enough. Whether it's a little or whether it's a lot. Or maybe for a long time or many years. If you sinned before your conversion.

[38 : 48] It's enough. And that's the idea here. Arm yourselves with this thought. The time you've spent sinning in your past life without Christ is enough.

It's enough. Make a resolute break from it. There are a lot of Christians who have not done that. In fact, quite honestly, it's pretty difficult to define someone with the term Christian.

If there's been no break. And yet I do know that there are some who are converted to Christ. True born again believers.

Who have allowed remnants of that past sinful life to persist. Or maybe they've come back to parts of it and have struggled with it and have not applied repentance and Scripture to it. But Peter says it's enough. Make a resolute break. Separate yourself from your past sinfulness and choose the will of God.

[40:06] Choose His will. And suffer for it if God so desires. Suffer for it. You see, this is how we arm ourselves.

Do you see how this could make a difference? As you go forward and obey the commission? To go forward and live for Christ?

To go forward and be a witness of the Gospel and the saving faith? Armed with this purpose. I'm going to suffer with my Christ.

Because His purpose is my purpose. The redemption of the lost to Christ. And to go forward with purity.

The armor of purity. Separate myself from sinfulness. Separate myself completely from it.

Resolutely make a break from all of that.

[41:06] Because all of that was enough. It's enough. It's over with. I'm going forward and suffer if God so desires. With this complete break from sin.

This is armor. Real strong armor. There are two more aspects of our armor that I'm going to leave for now.

As a matter of fact, because our focus for the next five Sundays is going to be missions. And so I'm going to be going a little different direction. I'm going to cover the rest of these tonight.

So come back tonight and we'll see the other two features of our armor. But we need to begin right now. To apply this armor.

To suit up with it. To weaponize ourselves. That's the idea. Weaponize ourselves with the same purpose Christ had when He suffered and died.

[42:12] To weaponize ourselves with purity. Weaponize ourselves with purity.