

17. The Epistle of 1Peter—4:1-5

(4/11/18)

Tonight, in our study of 1Peter we come to chapter 4 verse 1 which starts with the word ‘**Therefore**’.

As we have pointed out numerous times in our study of 1Peter—when you see a ‘therefore’ starting a sentence you know that the writer is now going to be making application to our lives from what he has just gotten done saying.

In this case, Peter has been talking about how Christ suffered and died—

1 Peter 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

1 Peter 4:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ **Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,** 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.**

The key idea that this whole paragraph is built around is found in the phrase “**arm yourselves**”.

It comes from the Greek verb *hoplizomai*, a word that was used of a Greek soldier preparing himself for battle by putting on his armor.

But understand, this Greek word isn’t used for *light* armor but for *heavy* armor—the kind used for serious combat against a formidable enemy.

Paul used the noun form of this word to refer to the “armor” of light (Rom. 13:12), “weapons” of righteousness (2 Cor. 6:7), and “weapons” of spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:4)

One author rightly warned—

“God does not promise to carry us to the skies on flowery beds of ease. God does not hand out colorful brochures offering good health, prosperity, wide popularity, and a long life to those who accept Christ. Those who array themselves in such flimsy robes are in for a shock.”

So, when Peter tells us to “**arm yourselves**”—it is a command to prepare for battle.

But notice what he connects this command to—“**arm yourselves also with the same mind**”

Of course, the *mind* that Peter is referring to is the “mind of Christ” toward suffering—

William MacDonald—

“We have been considering Christ as an example of One who suffered unjustly. He suffered at the hands of wicked men for the cause of righteousness. Since this was so, His followers should arm themselves with the same mind. They should expect to suffer for His name. They should be prepared to endure persecution because they are Christians.”

This is very interesting and extremely important for us to understand that our *mind* (mindset, attitude) is also a *weapon* in the Christian’s arsenal—without which we cannot be victorious.

Wiersbe—

“The picture is that of a soldier who puts on his equipment and arms himself for battle. Our attitudes are weapons, and weak or wrong attitudes will lead us to defeat. Outlook determines outcome, and a believer must have the right attitudes if he is to live a right life.”

All believers know about the *armor* of the Christian that Paul lists in Ephesians 6—but few understand that without arming themselves with the proper *attitude*—it is worthless.

Again, this is critical to our victory in the Christian life over Satan and sin—Paul put it this way:

2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NKJV)

³You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

This gets into the “mindset” or “attitude” of a soldier of Christ—we talked about this a couple of weeks ago, but since Peter brings it up let’s revisit this subject again briefly.

You see, before you will be *willing* (speaks of ‘attitude’) to endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ—you first must think of yourself as a soldier of Christ!

If you don’t think of yourself as a soldier of Christ fighting in a war against the devil and his demons for the souls of men and women (especially those closest to you)—you’ll never be a good soldier of Jesus Christ or victorious over the enemy.

A soldier can have the finest body armor and weaponry that money can buy but if he or she doesn’t have the mind-set of a soldier, if they refuse to fight or are unwilling to endure hardships and suffering for the cause of Christ—then it’s all worthless.

Too many Christians are unwilling to endure hardships for Christ because they have been led to believe that the Christian life is—not about war it’s about wealth—the wealth they were promised if they became Christians.

Jesus said it is impossible to serve two masters—God and money.

If you try you’ll only get yourself entangled with the cares of this life—and distracted.

In battle if a soldier allows himself to get distracted—at very least he will probably be defeated, and possibly worse—he could wind up dead.

Which means he *must* keep his head in the battle, he must maintain a disciplined mind if he's going to stay alive and be victorious—and the same is true in the Christian life.

We must understand that faithfulness and victory in the Christian life starts with the way you think—the way you perceive what the Christian life is all about.

A good soldier of Jesus Christ is a person who has only one thing in mind—to obey Jesus and endure whatever hardship it takes to win the battles you face on His behalf.

God has given us everything we need to win this war—but we must have the “mind of Christ” and not a “carnal mind” in love with the world.

Too many Christians are AWOL when it comes to spiritual warfare—and that's because they view the Christian life as a ‘playground’ instead of a battleground.

For them it's all about socializing, networking, fellowship and fun—and not about fighting the battles of the Lord.

They are not fighting the good fight of faith—they are double minded, trying to serve two masters—God and the world.

That is always a recipe for defeat—but then Peter adds another thought—

1 Peter 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, **for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,**

There are 3 possible interpretations to this statement by Peter—

1. *He is talking about suffering martyrdom for the cause of Christ at which time our spirit will be released from our body and sin will no longer be an issue.*
2. *He is speaking of identifying with Christ's suffering by faith (death, burial and resurrection) and how, when we do, sin's power will be rendered 'inoperative' in our lives (Rom.6)—at which time we will stop living habitually in sin as we did before we got saved.*

Warren Wiersbe—

“Our goal in life is to “cease from sin.” We will not reach this goal until we die, or are called home when the Lord returns; but this should not keep us from striving (1 John 2:28–3:9). Peter did not say that suffering of itself would cause a person to stop sinning. Pharaoh in Egypt went through great suffering in the plagues, and yet he sinned even more! I have visited suffering people who cursed God and grew more and more bitter because of their pain.

Suffering, plus Christ in our lives, can help us have victory over sin. But the central idea here seems to be the same truth taught in Romans 6: We are identified with Christ in His suffering and death, and therefore can have victory over sin. As we yield ourselves to God, and have the same attitude toward sin that Jesus had, we can overcome the old life and manifest the new life.”

3. *He is talking about how physical suffering and persecution for Christ's sake will cause sin in our lives to have less and less of a hold on us.*

One pastor said this—

*“When a person suffers physical persecution for the sake of Jesus, it almost always profoundly changes their outlook regarding sin and the pursuit of the lusts of the flesh. That one is more likely to **live the rest of his time in the flesh not for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.**”*

I'm not sure which one exactly Peter had in mind—but all 3 are biblical and should be taken to heart.

I think commentator John Phillips put it well when he said—

*“Peter adds another thought: **“for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”** A believer who has been persecuted is a believer who has learned how to live the victorious life—the kind of life that Paul describes in Romans 6. He has died to sin. He lives on the other side of death, on resurrection ground—the truth of which Peter has just reminded his readers, the spiritual significance of their baptism (not water baptism, but into Christ). The world does not generally persecute the carnal, worldly, backslidden believer. Such a believer poses no threat, awakens no accusing conscience, and causes no inconvenience. Peter learned that lesson the night he warmed his hands in the world’s fire, in the courtyard of the high priest’s palace, at the time Jesus was on trial. In those days, Peter had not learned how to arm himself. His mind was in such turmoil that he denied again and again having any connection with Christ. The world let him alone when he began to curse and swear. That was their kind of language. They recognized it at once. Peter was no longer an outsider. He could come and go as he pleased. But a believer living in the power of an indwelling Christ treads the path of victory over sin. He is a threat to the wicked. The fact that they persecute him bears witness to the quality of his life.”*

Suffering in general has a way of changing our hearts toward the cares of this life—(share the testimony of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on this subject).

Another pastor offered an interesting perspective on this subject—

“When you go through tough times, realize, first, that suffering loosens sin’s grip on us. That is, when you go through suffering, you no longer give in to the lusts of the flesh; you no longer succumb to sin with the same ease, the same vulnerability you experienced previously. Why? Perhaps the story of a man in the Rogue Valley (Oregon) provides the best answer....

Known as the life of the party, he played on the local softball team and would often supply the keg. When his three-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver, he lost his heart for partying. He was no longer interested in the keggers after the softball games. He found himself despising the places to which he was once attracted when he saw the reality of what drunkenness and partying did to his own family.

That’s what suffering does. That’s what trials do. The ugliness of sin is seen when it begins to touch your own life. That is why Peter says, “If you’ve suffered in the flesh—either due to your own sin or sin by the hands of others—you see the result of sin and realize that rather than being something to wink or chuckle at, sin stinks.”

1 Peter 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 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. ³ 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 [i.e. ‘pagan worship’].

Chuck Swindoll—

“Don’t overlook the strong contrast between the “will of God” (v. 2) and the “desire of the Gentiles” (v. 3). Peter says, “The time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles.” In a certain sense, all believers have in their lives a BC and an AD—before Christ and after Christ. Peter saw “year one” as the moment of conversion, officially marked by baptism (3:21).

Before this spiritual birthday, the old person lived out the old course of life—“sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (4:3). Peter’s list isn’t exhaustive, but it paints an ugly picture of many believers’ “BC” years. When we consider that most people in the world still live in this “BC” period, it shouldn’t surprise us that they expect everybody to speak their foul language, follow their distorted mind-set and customs, and uphold their corrupt cultural values. When we don’t conform, they notice. When we allow our transformation to play out on the stage of life, we will stand out from the rest of the crowd by the fact that we don’t participate in their self-indulgent escapades.”

Here’s the bottom line—are we going to choose to fully renounce and walk away from the old life to live totally for the Lord, or are we going to try and serve two masters—the Lord and the world?

In some ways it reminds me of Israel in the wilderness after God brought them out of Egypt. (Explain)

Spiritually speaking, this is a terrible place to be in—

Chuck Smith—

“You get around worldly people and you get uncomfortable because there’s too much of Christ in you to allow you to be comfortable there; but you’ve got too much of the world in you to be really satisfied with just your relationship with Jesus, and so you’re stuck between two worlds”

Unfortunately, many Christians die in the spiritual wilderness of carnality and compromise and never do make it into the ‘promised land’ (life of the Spirit)—Explain

Peter is desperately trying to keep us from that tragedy—but we absolutely must have the mind of Christ on the subject of suffering—

1 Peter 2:19-24 (NKJV)

¹⁹ For this *is* commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is* commendable before God.

²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ²² "*Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth*"; ²³ who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴ who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.

1 Peter 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ **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*.**

Isn't it interesting how unbelievers think—they think it's completely normal to drink themselves into an early grave or sleep around where they might catch an incurable STD—in their minds it's completely normal behavior.

But if a person who lives that way gets saved and stops those destructive behaviors—unbelievers think that person is some kind of crazy weirdo!

1 Peter 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.**

The living—are those alive when Peter wrote this epistle—and **the dead** of course are those who had died in their sins but will be resurrected to stand before Jesus at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Most people believe in God—but mostly that He is a God of love who won't judge people (except for the worst criminals) and send them to hell (if they even believe in hell).

And because they believe this—there is no fear of God (coming judgment) in their hearts and therefore nothing to keep their sinful desires in check.

And the ‘last days’ church feeds right into this, as many pastors, leaders—and even the pope himself are claiming that hell isn’t real or if it is people cast into hell just cease to exist.

In the book of Proverbs we read—“*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—the fear of the Lord is to hate evil*”—but if not God will judge sinful living.

Psalm 36:1 (NKJV)

¹ An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked: *There is no fear of God before his eyes.*

Jeremiah 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Your own wickedness will correct you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that *it is* an evil and bitter *thing* that you have forsaken the LORD your God, And the fear of Me *is not in you.*," Says the Lord GOD of hosts.

Psalm 10:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, "*You will not require an account.*" [there will be no day of reckoning—no consequences for their actions]

But on this point they are woefully ignorant—

2 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom...

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Revelation 20:12 (NKJV)

¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The church is to be the conscience of society—a restrainer of evil. (2Thess.2:6-7)

When Christian leaders downplay hell or flat out deny it exists—they are helping to promote sin and those unbelievers will be judged more harshly by the Lord someday for the volume of sin they committed during their life on earth.

The good news is that God stands ready to forgive them of those sins—but only by accepting Jesus and only while they're still alive on the earth.