

Prepared for Battle Pt. 1

1 Peter 4:1-4 (10/16/16)

Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

1 Peter 4:1-4 Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 3 For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 4 In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;

Notice the command in verse 1, “Arm yourself!” No one can deny we are living in increasingly dangerous times. We don’t know when the next terrorist attack will take place. There is great confusion in our own government about how to fight our enemies. One leading principle has always been that the way to maintain freedom is through military superiority. Freedom comes through strength. The same is true in our spiritual battle.

Peter is giving us counsel on how to prepare for battle in a world that is at enmity with God. He is talking about how to suffer well as aliens and strangers in this world. When you came to Christ, you came to a life that runs in the opposite direction of the culture. Christianity is counter-culture. You represent God, truth, righteousness, and especially Christ and His cross, and that means you are going to suffer as you live for Christ. And that means you need to arm yourself.

ARMED TO SUFFER – v. 1 *Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*

First, keep Christ first and centered. Put Him on the front burner of your heart, your affections, and your faith. When the Greeks wanted to emphasize something, they put it right up front in the sentence. Peter puts Christ right up front in this sentence. And you must remind yourself day after day in your battle with sin and suffering – Christ is first. Look to Him. Live with this banner over your life – your goal and aim in your life is to please God by living for Christ. And living for Christ includes suffering.

What did Christ do for you? Go back to 1 Peter 3:17-18 and tie that right into 4:1.

1 Peter 3:17-18 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. 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

What did Christ do? In order to bring us to God, He suffered in His flesh, His body. And it hurt. Christ suffered in His battle with sin. It’s a good thing to often remind yourself of what your Savior endured to bring you to God: betrayal, false accusations, abuse, mockery, pain – overwhelming pain, humiliation, hung naked and bleeding until He died – all to bring you to God. Not to mention the far greater agony of bearing the wrath of God in His body in your place, as your substitute. But Peter is emphasizing His physical suffering. Since He suffered as your Savior and Lord, you must be prepared to suffer in this world. Hebrews 2:10 and 18 say the same thing. Christ came to earth and immersed Himself in human suffering to become exactly the Savior we needed.

Hebrews 2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.... 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Coming to Christ brings you eternal blessings, but it also means you must be prepared to suffer. Too often believers who suffer in various ways are often so consumed with their problems they forget to keep

Christ first in their troubles. Be aware and discipline yourself to keep Christ front and center all the time through all your hardships.

Second, arm yourself with Christ's mindset. Now Peter applies Christ's suffering to your sufferings. Christ suffered to bring you to God. It wasn't easy; it involved suffering on His part. So arm yourself and prepare yourself as a soldier prepares for battle. This is very aggressive. When the battle rages, soldiers cannot be passive. They hustle and arm up for battle!

How do you arm yourself? Here it is – develop the same way of thinking that Christ had and maintain it every day. He came to do the will of God and He did it regardless of the suffering. Arm yourself with that same mindset, that same mental perspective and determination. How many new Christians think the Christian life is going to be a cakewalk and excitedly talk about it to others only to find out not everyone is as enthused as they are. Be prepared. Warren Wiersbe says, "Our attitudes are weapons, and weak or wrong attitudes will lead us to defeat." You need a strong, militant attitude that is determined to make war on sin in your own body regardless of the cost. Compare Samson in Delilah's lap completely unarmed mentally with his thoughts totally on her to David being fully armed with faith in His God and prepared with five stones for the battle against Goliath. Arm yourself for your battle with sin, which includes suffering or hardship. This is precisely why Jesus said if you're going to be His disciple, you'll have to deny yourself, take up your cross – which is never pleasant – and follow Him.

In order to fight this war against the devil, this anti-God world you live in, and your own fleshly desires, you must always be on the alert. Have you ever watched a little chipmunk nibbling away on an acorn or seed? He is always on highest alert, armed by God to detect any danger with his ears and eyes. At the slightest hint of danger, he immediately scurries for safety, signaling others with his shrill chirping.

Arm yourself with this same alert awareness so you can flee sin when it first presents itself and obey Christ even if it means suffering. Now understand this; suffering is not just having your head cut off or being burned at the stake for Jesus. That certainly is suffering, but suffering as a Christian is any cost you endure because you're walking with Christ. It may be giving up a relationship headed in the wrong direction, refusing to lie for the company, enduring personal ridicule, patiently forbearing an angry spouse, or any hardship you deal with because you are following Christ who suffered for you. This is exactly how Martin Luther faced his suffering. He said, "Regardless of what comes, here I stand on God's Word, I can't do otherwise, God help me!" And, of course, he was declared an enemy of the state and condemned to death. He wrote, "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill: God truth abideth still – His kingdom is forever." He was armed with that Christ-like mindset, "Whatever the cost, I'm standing firm for Christ." You and I need to be armed with Christ's mindset as we face growing opposition to the gospel in our own world.

Third, your relationship with Christ means a decisive break with sin. "The one who has suffered" in verse 1 is another way of saying the one who has come to Christ as our suffering Savior. If you have come to Christ, you have come to a battle with sin and that means suffering in some way or other. Faith and suffering always go together. Philippians 1:29, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

You ceased from a life of sin when you came to Christ. Before knowing Christ, you followed your own self-pleasing desires and goals and did what you wanted to do. Now that you've come to Christ, you want to please Him above all else; your personal desires come second. You have entered a life willing to suffer as a believer and you're done with living a self-centered life of sin. Does this describe you?

ROMANS 6 – YOUR FOUNDATIONAL WEAPON AGAINST SIN

In verse 1 Peter in his own way is talking about our identification or union with Christ. The fact is that when you came to Christ, your old life ended and a new life began. You became a new creation. I want to take you over to Romans 6 for a few minutes. This is the passage Martyn Lloyd-Jones described as "the most liberating chapter in my whole Christian experience!" The truth of your union with Christ by being baptized into Christ is a mental, faith weapon that is utterly crucial in your battle with sin. When you are born again, you have gained a completely new identity and position in Christ. You used to be dead to God

and alive to sin. When God gave you new life through the gospel, now you are dead to sin and alive to God.

I like to picture it with two cups. You were born in the Adam cup: alive to sin, dead to God, under condemnation, God's enemy and a child of wrath. When God saved you, He took you out of the Adam cup through the suffering and payment of the cross, and baptized you or placed you into the Christ cup. Your identity is now in Christ. Everything true about Christ is now true about you. His death is your death, His burial is yours, His resurrection is yours spiritually now and physically yours in the future. You are in Christ. Where Christ is you are, forever. No one ever spills out of the Christ cup!

In Romans 6:1-10 there are some facts you need to know – look for them as I read:

Romans 6:1-7 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Here are the facts you need to know. You died to sin because you were baptized into Christ's death; you are free from sin's control. You were buried with Christ, united with Christ, and your old man, your old position in Adam was crucified. You are not longer in Adam. Christ died to sin once for all; in Him you're no longer a slave of sin. These are all facts!

In Romans 6:11 there is something you need to count on.

Romans 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"Consider" is our word "logical." Calculate this truth for your life: you are dead to sin! In your battle with sin and suffering, you need to base your life on this truth. Before you came to Christ, sin was your master. The moment you came to Christ, you died to sin's dominion and power over your life and you instantly became alive to God. You have a vital and living relationship with God. Count on this because it's true! You are dead to sin and alive to God! You are free from sin's chains and able to choose to obey God! God took you out of Adam and placed you in Christ. His death to sin is your death to sin and His resurrection to life is your resurrection to life. "Think saved," as Pastor Bill Goode said from this passage. As you face temptation to sin, remember who you are in Christ. Think saved!

In Romans 6:12-13 there is something you need to do.

Romans 6:12-13 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Is sin still in you? Yes. But sin is not your master; Christ is your Master. Sin is still hiding out in your heart – those selfish desires to please yourself are still in your body and your mind. However, you don't have to obey those selfish desires. Because you are in Christ and have His power in you, you are free to say no to sin and obey God. Arm up with the weapons of righteousness. Fight against sin in your body. When they rise up, shoot them down. And the way to do this is not just to put off sin, but give yourself and present yourself to God every day. Give Him all you have: your thought life, your speech, your hands and feet and eyes – everything. And especially give Him your heart where those idols rise up every day, trying to shove Christ off the throne of your heart.

Arm yourself with this fundamental weapon against sin – your union with Christ. This is how you mortify sin or kill sin in your life. You apply your union with Christ in your battle against sin, even when it includes suffering, which it inevitably will.

AMMUNITION TO FIGHT YOUR BATTLE

Freedom comes through strength, through being armed for the battle. You may have a powerful weapon in your battle, but if you don't have ammunition in the chamber, your weapon is only a museum piece. I want to conclude with several rounds of ammunition you can keep handy when the enemy surprises you, and sin will surprise you.

#1 Learn to hate sin – Psalm 97:10. The best way to hate sin is to see what it cost Jesus to save you from your sin and the ugly, destroying effects of sin.

#2 Purpose not to sin -- Romans 13:14 says don't make any provision for the flesh. Be on guard and plan ahead not to sin. You may have to tell those guys at school you won't be joining them when you know they'll be doing something Christ would not commend.

#3 Deal with sin as quickly as possible – James 1:14-15. Step on your pride or anger or jealousy as soon as you feel it stirring! As soon as you feel the tug to sin, fight it and deal with it quickly.

#4 Confess quickly to God and others – 1 John 1:9. Refusing to admit sin only hardens your heart and cuts your relationship with God and others.

#5 Keep a daily vigil against sin. Keep that chipmunk mentality; always be on the alert. Matthew 26:41, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." Proverb 4:23, "Above all, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

#6 Load your heart and conscience with God's Word. Psalm 119:11, "Your Word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You." When sin fires a missile, be ready by having your chamber full of God's truth and you will be able to blast that sin right out of your heart.

#7 Stay close to other Christians. Hebrews 3:12-13, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Looking back to our passage this morning, 1 Peter 4:1 tells us that Christ suffered in the flesh in His war against sin. You too can count on suffering in the flesh as you fight your war against sin. No one likes to suffer. One author said we Americans want "full stomachs, healthy bodies, and bulging wallets." He's right and that's why there is so much false teaching going on in the health, wealth, and prosperity message.

So be sure to arm yourself! Always keep Christ first in your life. Develop the same mindset as Christ had and determine you will live for Christ regardless of the cost, the pain, the suffering, and the difficulty in this world. And as you suffer, always remember this. The privilege of having a relationship with the Almighty God, Creator of the universe as you walk this earth, and knowing you will spend an eternity with Him enjoying things more than you can imagine, far exceeds hard times in this short, fleeting world.

Prepare for battle and have your ammunition ready as you honor and please Him with your life.