

1 Peter 4:1-6

1Pe 4:1 (NKJV) **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. 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*. ⁵ They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 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.**

This morning I only want to address one issue of v1 – the mandate for the believer to “**arm yourselves with the same mind**” that Christ had. The problem is that if any believer consciously chooses to live for the world which they cannot see, there must be the corresponding understanding that it requires a great mental battle to do so. We always win or lose spiritual battles in our minds, and not primarily in our hearts. I am reminded of verses like [Romans 7:23](#) which identifies the actual battlefield on which we fight and struggle,

Ro 7:23 (NKJV) **But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.**

It does not say “warring against the law of my heart”. Your mind is the battlefield. [Romans 12:2](#) says,

Ro 12:2 (NKJV) **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

Once again, it does not say “be transformed by the renewing of your heart”. [Colossians 3:2](#) says,

Col 3:2 (NKJV) **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

It does not say to “set your heart on things above”. Once again, our battle is always a mental battle. What we think and how we think will always govern what we do and how we live. So, we have to take Peter’s exhortation seriously. We have to think biblically, we have to think strong, we have to prepare ourselves mentally for the kind of life that God actually wants us to live.

We are what we think. We become what we think. We are the simple by-product of how we think. Outlook determines outcome. If we think negatively about everything, we become a negative person. If we think selfishly, we become selfish. If we think of being encouraging to others, we become encouragers. We are what we think. Every committed follower of Christ must have a certain level of personal resolve, of personal resolution and determination that relates back to their Christian life. There simply are times in every believer’s life when they need to have a personal examination of their life to help ensure that they are still living in such a way that God would be pleased with their life. Personally, I am convinced that before God disciplines us for disobedience or spiritual indifference that He is generous and allows for a period of self-examination and self-correction on our part.

Unless you have not noticed, it takes a very strong commitment to live out the Christian life in a culture that is obsessed with destroying every vestige of the Christian faith possible. It is amazing at how easily

believers can become discouraged and removed from a place of spiritual confidence in their life. Many people are easily disheartened with every piece of bad news that they hear. It is as if their Christian life rises or falls on what ABC reports on the evening news, or if the stock market went up or down. The evil that surrounds us or the political left or various economic issues easily discourage people, but it really should not be that way at all. It is all about having the right mindset, the right perspective. We simply become what we think and how we think.

[1 Corinthians 15:58](#) is one of my favorite verses and says the following,

1Co 15:58 (NKJV) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

The word “**steadfast**” means simply means to be settled, to be steady and specifically to be steady in one’s mind and purpose.¹ The more “**steadfast**” that someone is simply reveals that they have a greater purpose and a greater resolution than others. [Colossians 1:23](#) says,

Col 1:23 (NKJV) if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

Here the believer who is “**grounded and steadfast**” in how they think is said to not be “**moved away**” and metaphorically it means that they are not falling away, not wavering, not casually and indifferently wandering from those things that are so vital for their Christian life. As a pastor, I really am not concerned with whether or not someone fails. In fact, I think that it is reasonable to assume that often times believers will fail. Failure is just as much a part of the human experience as is success – maybe even more so because it is God’s way of keeping us humble. The issue is that if they fall seven times that they get up eight times. For me the issue is not how spiritual someone is, but how spiritual they want to be. We live in a Laodicean church age that has the subtle power to distract the Christian from what it even means to be a Christian, and especially in a culture that does not relish Christian values and virtues. If I can say it this way, in the Christian life that is successful there are two distinct qualities that are part of parcel with one another – faith and determination. That is what keeps the believer focused, and what keeps them going, and both require a certain mindset and way of thinking that helps them to be what God wants them to be. I am convinced that the difference between the Christian who is spiritually successful in their life and the believer who is not, is not that they lack strength, wisdom or understanding, but that they lack the will and the determination to be what God wants them to be.

Now, the key verb in this entire passage is the verb “**arm yourselves**” simply because it is an aorist imperative tense verb in the passive voice. Everything that Peter is going to say in these six verses revolves around having the same mind as Christ. So, what the believer is to “**arm**” themselves with is the “**same mind**”, the same mindset that Christ had, and specifically his mindset regarding the issue of suffering. The word for “**mind**” in this context refers to having understanding and wisdom because the individual has carefully considered something and its impact on their life.² It is very interesting to me personally at how differently some of the translations translates this phrase. The NASB says “**arm**

¹ Zodhiates, 501.

² Harris, #1775, ep.

yourselves with the same purpose". The ESV says "**arm yourselves with the same way of thinking**". The AMP says "**arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose**". The NIV says "**arm yourselves with the same attitude**". The HCSB says "**equip yourselves also with the same resolve**". The ISV says "**arm yourselves with the same determination**". The reason that there is so much variation is because of the depth of meaning of the word "**mind**". It means all of these things – "**purpose, way of thinking, attitude, resolve, determination**". That is why we began this study addressing the issues of determination and resolve because that is the actual meaning of this phrase – to develop the same resolve and determination in our life that Christ had. [Hebrews 12:3-4](#), speaking of Christ, says,

Heb 12:3 (NKJV) **For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁴ You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.**

Christ had a certain mindset, a certain spiritual resolve in His life. He was never haphazard about anything in his life or anything that was happening to Him because His mindset, His way of thinking, His resolve was to only do that which would glorify His Father.

Suffering, and especially when it may be unjust and undeserved, may be one of the greatest hindrances to someone's motivation to live out their life with this kind of purpose, resolution, and determination – and Peter certainly recognizes that reality. Now, because the term for "**arm yourselves**" is in the aorist imperative, it carries the idea of urgency to do something right now, to make it the very focus of your life immediately. The word for "**arm**" is a military term and it carries the idea of putting on spiritual armor so that you can go out to battle. The reality is that whether we like it or not that we are engaged in a spiritual war with the world, the flesh, and the devil. No believer gets a reprieve or spiritual amnesty from this reality. If as a believer I fail to both recognize and accept that I am involved in a spiritual battle for my life, for my family, for my faith, for my friends, for my church, then in all likelihood I will just become neutralized in my Christian life and never be used by God to make an impact of any kind whatsoever. This idea of being armed is not some kind of spiritual game that we play when we have time. This is not like playing Solitaire or Scrabble or Sudoku before you go to bed. To the contrary, the enemy surrounds us every single day of our lives, and whether we like it or not, we cannot be neutral to what he is trying to do to us and in us. His ability to deceive and to undermine our faith is undeniable, and if we simply walk away from that reality as if we are the spiritual exception, we have already been defeated. Once again, you are involved in this spiritual war whether you want to be or not. The question is whether or not you have the kind of mindset that will help you in that war.

We have to think like Christ thought. We have to have His mind. That is what will protect us in this very subtle warfare that surrounds us each day. We are fighting against an absolute onslaught of evil that gains incredible momentum every day. Our country is headed to a civil war, and it is a war against spiritual values and biblical ethics. The family is being redefined. Marriage is being redefined. The minds of our children are being undermined by the internet, its games, and its influence. If you really want to discipline one of your children and make them incredibly angry with you, then just take away their iPhone. It has become the world in which they live. In many churches half the young people are on their mobile phones and texting back and forth with their friends in the service, many of them playing games and finding out what is going on. Family time and growing together as a family has almost become a thing of the past. Unfortunately, we are much too busy and pre-occupied with things that

really have no eternal value. Statistics have clearly shown that the vast majority of young people today do not believe in absolute truth, and for that reason it is more than easy for them to reject the moral teachings and values of the Bible. Even the adults no longer want to hear about biblical absolutes or to hear strong preaching. It is much too restrictive and oppressive to the modern mind.

Most preaching is boring to the average listener and strong doctrinal teaching puts most of them to sleep within just a few minutes. People go to church more for the emotional experience and to feel the music more than the pursuit of biblical truth, so if they do not receive the entertainment they are looking for, they go somewhere else that can satisfy their insatiable desire for anything but truth. Then to make matters worse, the church has issued the call to “simply make a decision” rather than become a devoted follower of Jesus Christ. I remember as a child playing hide and seek, and the person who was doing the hunting would count to 10 and then say “*Ready or not, here I come!*” Well, ready or not, here comes the spiritual battle, and believe me, but the war is on, and you are a part of it.

For our course on Hermeneutics at school I have done some research and found many surveys that have consistently shown that anyone who holds to the dogma of absolute truth is in a minority. Even among strong evangelicals and people who call themselves born again Christians, moral and absolute truth is only believed by less than 40% of the people in that group, and only about 10% of young adults and teenagers. We could simply define a biblical worldview as believing that absolute moral truth exists, that what the Bible teaches is both true and accurate, that Satan is a real force in the world, and that Jesus Christ is the only means by which a person can be saved.³ These absolute axioms define the issue for us as believers, and many professing believers simply are not willing to accept them. If the reality that 90% of the younger generation does not accept a biblical worldview is projected out into their adult lifetime, it simply means that Christianity will have no sustainable base for furthering the gospel.

I recognize that what I am telling you this morning is not what we might call strong, exegetical teaching, but the point should be well understood for you as a believer that you must “**arm yourselves**” with the mind of Christ. The word “**arm**” is “*hoplizo*” and it means to make yourself ready, to prepare yourself, and to ensure that you are actually equipped with weapons that allow you to be engaged in this warfare that surrounds us and defines our culture. It is not just the idea of being armed, but of being heavily armed. This is the only place that this word is used in the New Testament.⁴ Most Christians are not heavily armed and certainly not that willing to be engaged in the kind of spiritual warfare in which Jesus was involved. Now, listen very carefully. [Ephesians 6:14-18](#) provides the believer with many weapons – truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, prayer, and the Word of God. Those are all very real and very necessary if we are going to be able to be sustained during the spiritual conflict that constantly surrounds us. However, none of those are the actual weapon that Peter is addressing in v1. The weapon he provides is that of having the mind of Christ when it comes to suffering and when it comes to facing those moments in our life that are very difficult and maybe even harmful. Please do not forget where we began this study. How and what you think will always determine how you act and react in any given circumstance. It takes almost little to no effort to find yourself overtaken in a fault and in some sin. Sin

³ Riley, ep.

⁴ Precept, *1 Peter 4:1*, ep.

is a trap, and so being prepared both spiritually and mentally is what helps us to persevere in the faith and to run the race with endurance.

We are not on a spiritual vacation in this world. Whether we like it or not we are soldiers on a battlefield fighting against a very real enemy that wants to destroy every biblical value that we have and destroy everyone in our families – so he does not mind at all if you just kick back and relax. In fact, that is exactly what he wants you to do. This is not my home, this world is not my destiny, and my citizenship is not of this world. You see, the word “**arm yourselves**” does not really give us a spiritual choice. To the contrary, it demands that we make a very decisive choice. Peter had previously written about this mindset in [1 Peter 1:13](#) when he wrote,

1Pe 1:13 (NKJV) **Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;**

In [1 Peter 5:8](#) he will say this to us,

1Pe 5:8 (NKJV) **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**

You do not want either yourself, your family, or your loved ones to be the ones being devoured – which simply means to be overwhelmed by something.⁵ Whether you believe it or not, people that you both know and love are being overwhelmed by Satan and by sin – and they do not even know it. Because the term for “**arm yourselves**” is in the middle voice, what that does is to make it the believer’s personal responsibility to “**arm**” themselves with the mind of Christ. The idea is clearly that of “**you arm yourself**”. Peter is going to remind us in [1 Peter 4:12](#) that what he calls “**fiery trials**” will test us and will try our faith, and so it is critical that we have developed the mindset of Christ and have a personal determination to not be overcome by those things that threaten our Christian life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Harris, Ralph. W., ed. *The Complete Biblical Library: Greek English Dictionary*. Springfield, Missouri: World Library Press Inc., n.d.

Precept Austin. n.d. <http://www.preceptaustin.org>.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.

⁵ Harris, #2636, ep.