

Arm Yourself

Introduction

- Here in America, we've fought hard for our constitutional right to bear arms (the 2nd Amendment). You've probably seen bumper stickers, shirts, Facebook posts, and lawn signs focused on keeping our guns. And some people are more heavily armed than others.
- Remember when Peter once armed himself for Christ, back when he found a sword which he used to defend Jesus in the garden (John 18:10)? But Jesus rebuked him, and later he told Pilate, "*My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world*" (John 18:36).
- Did Peter learn his lesson? Well, here in 1 Peter 4, as he's helping these "elect exiles of the Dispersion" deal with suffering, he *again* calls believers to "arm themselves" — but it's not what you might think.

Arm Yourself to Break From Sin

"Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-2).

- **Takeaways**
 - Peter mentions Christ's suffering, as he has in every chapter so far. Why? Because we only know how to deal with our own suffering when looking to the way he handled his. He was a silent lamb, enduring it all for the greater good. And we should be "playing the long game" too, not burning bridges during our trials, but building bridges by our good deeds.
 - It's Christ's "*way of thinking*" and willingness to suffer that leads us to stop sinning — breaking away from "*human passions*" to live for the "*will of God.*" "*Not my will, but yours, be done*" (Luke 22:42).
 - **[Illustration: Dieting and changing our tastebuds.]**
- **Applications**
 - How does thinking like Christ change your relationship to this world and sufferings?
 - Is there "human passion" in your life, maybe something hidden, that's got a tight grip on your heart? What would *sting* if it were taken away?

Arm Yourself for Rejection

"For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does" (1 Peter 4:3-6).

- **Takeaways**
 - We've had enough time living to sin like the rest of the world. And as we turn away from these sinful practices, the world will be surprised by your change. It's no wonder while they'll see us as "different" — not fearing what they fear or living like they do — and ask about our hope (1 Peter 3:15).
 - Though the world may reject God (and our message), there's still hope. It's why we preach to our enemies, show love to them, have grace and mercy in our interactions, so they might someday *"live in the spirit the way God does."*
 - **[Illustration: My experience not going to the dances in high school.]**
- **Applications**
 - What times in your life have people noticed that you haven't joined them in sin? What were the consequences?
 - Is there someone you've written off as a "lost cause" that you might need to consider speaking to about the gospel?

Arm Yourself for the Final Judgment

"The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:7-11).

- **Takeaways**
 - The end is coming — it's at hand! God is going to judge the whole world, including you. So get ready for that day like a servant who prepares for their master's return (Luke 12:43).
 - Peter's list about practical obedience here focuses on everyone, of every age, and every skill-level. We all need to be self-controlled, sober-minded, loving sincerely, hospitable, using our gifts, speaking the truth, and serving people with God's strength. And we don't live like this JUST to escape judgment, but our main goal is to bring glory to God through Christ!
 - **[Illustration: I'm a procrastinator.]**
- **Applications**
 - What are you putting off until some day in the future? What are you waiting for?
 - Does your life embody the kind of self-control, sobriety, sincere love, hospitality, and service that Peter speaks about here?

Conclusion

- Just like Peter learned from Jesus in the garden, we don't take up physical arms against the hateful world to try and destroy them — even when they're on the offensive against us. Remember Paul's words, *"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the*

knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

- Have you armed yourself to break from sin?
- Have you armed yourself to face rejection?
- Have you armed yourself for the final judgment?