

TITLE: "Armed for Suffering" (Part 3)

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:3-5

THEME: *The time for sinning is past, the time for suffering is now, so suffer well!*

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{{Read Passage}}

[i] One of the more difficult statements by the Apostle Paul is found in Colossians 1:24 ==>

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Sometimes t/meaning of a verse can best be determined thru deduction. IOW - based on t/clear teaching of Script. what do we know that t/passage in question isn't saying. In fact, cults and false teachers specialize in taking difficult passages and twisting them to say something that is patently denied by clear passages & we'll look more at that next time.

So when we read this statement by Paul {restate} - we know that what he isn't saying is that t/atonement was lacking. IOW - Some might say that this passage is proof that t/finished work of X in dying for our sin wasn't really finished and it must be added to by way of human merit.

That is false. To say that X's sacrifice on t/cross was deficient is to proclaim another Gospel which is no gospel at all.

What Paul is saying, I believe, is that as a Christian he has been called to suffering even as Christ was called to suffering. But whereas Christ suffered and died to est. His CH, Paul is suffering to serve it.

X is no longer physically on earth to suffer. His suffering was finished. But we, says Paul, we are to suffer in His place and in so doing we fill up that which our Lord isn't here to do.

[i] In that regard - John Piper sees a connection between our suffering and fulfilling the Great Commission

The G.C. will not be completed apart from Suff. It's noteworthy in that regard that when Jesus said t/Gospel would be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations, He also said in the same context, "You will be hated by all the nations" (Matthew 24).

That is, wherever we go as Xns to live & proclaim t/message of X we can expect that t/response to our testimony will include persec. Some will receive us w/joy, others, most will do so w/scorn - even hatred.

We see this for example in the Book of Acts. That N.T. book, written by Luke, outlines t/history of t/early CH. We see how t/CH grew as t/gospel spread like wildfire. We also see how t/CH was persecuted.

It could be argued that the two are directly related. IOW - t/spread of t/CH was fueled by its suffering.

If we turn t/clock forward half a century to t/end of Paul's life, we find that he still believed that suffering and the Gospel were connected.

2 Timothy 1:8 **Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,**

2 Timothy 2:3 **Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**

2 Timothy 4:5 **But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship**
hardship = κακοπαθεω (suffer misfortune, bear up under suffering).

What about us? Well, Piper sums this all up as to relates to you and me by saying ==>

". . . we should expect to suffer if we are a part of God's advancing rescue operation-what Paul calls turning people "from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." [John Piper, Arming Yourself with the Purpose

to Suffer (sermon on 1 Peter 4:1-6), October 2, 1994]

[i] As I said a few weeks ago, this isn't popular

You won't likely fill CH's w/a message of suffering & self-sacrifice. But perhaps this is one of t/reasons why t/Evangelical CH in America Today is, for t/most part, t/CH of t/Tares - filled w/those who think they're okay because they can affirm something in their heads that they've never experienced in their hearts.

As t/cost of being a real Christian goes up in this country we will witness a transformation. Chs that have sold out to the neo-liberal seeker mentality will go full out liberal and shrink in size. Chs that uphold truth will be persecuted & purified by t/fire of persecution. Persecution Purifies.

You can count the cost & suffer

You can back down and be silent

You can run away & Sell-Out.

The time for sinning is past, the time for suffering is now, so suffer well!

[i] This is what it means to be armed for suffering

And that bring us back to 1 Peter chapter 4.

The question we've been answering from this text is ==>

I. What Does it Mean to be Armed for the Purpose of Suffering? Seven answers to that question . . .

First of which is ==>

A. To be Armed for the Purpose of Suffering Means We Have Clothed Ourselves With The Attitude of Christ (v 1a)

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same attitude . . .

1. The same attitude we saw in 2:22-23 {cite}

It's to suffer for doing what is right rather than what is wrong (3:17).

Second ==>

B. To be Armed for the Purpose of Suffering Means We Have Parted Ways With Our Past Life of Sin (v 1b)

. . . for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

1. That doesn't mean that we can achieve a state of sinlessness

For us to chose suffering for Christ over our own selfish pursuits demonstrates that our past love affair w/sin has been fractured. It's an evidence of real, saving faith.

2. You might write in the margin of your Bible 1:6-7

I think that passage complements this one nicely. There we read about how Peter's readers rejoiced greatly in their salvation. Yet, that salvation joy was being tempered by suffering. But that suffering, those trials of life, when they are endured with joy, serve as **"proof of your faith,"** a real faith that is more precious than gold & which will result in praise, glory, and honor at t/revelation of JC.

B. To be Armed for the Purpose of Suffering Means We Have Parted Ways With Our Past Life of Sin (v 1b)

Another way to read this would be to substitute "repented" for word "ceased."

. . . for he who has suffered in the flesh has [repented] from sin,

It's an indication that you have ceased to let sin dominate your life. That you have counted t/cost and have resolved to suffer whatever it takes to live to the will of God.

Thirdly ==>

C. To be Armed for the Purpose of Suffering Means We Are Engaged in the Pursuit of God's Will, Not Our Own (v 2)
for as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men but for the will of God.

1. The connection here is . . .

Your suffering as Christ suffered shows that you have ceased from sin, that relationship has been broken, and now you are free to pursue God's will rather than the sinful desires of men.

Implication is that at one time you lived for self. Now that you are a believer, you live for God.

That's evident from verse 3 and our 4th point which is where we parked last week ==>

D. *to be armed for the purpose of suffering means We Know the Season for Sinning is Past* (v 3)
For the time already past is sufficient [for you] to have carried out the desires of the pagans . . .

1. Some of you know what that's like don't you?

You can identify with Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6 where he talks about those who were once ==>

- fornicators, - To be engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage
- idolaters, - To place anything/anyone over t/pursuit of God
- adulterers, - To be married & join yourself with another who is not your spouse
- effeminate, - For a man to have a desire for, or a desire to be, sexually feminine or boyish.
- homosexuals,- The word ἀρσενικοίτης is described by Paul in Romans 1:27 **as men [who have] abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**
- thieves, - κλεπτης - anyone who gains by taking from another that which is not his.
- covetous, - Fuel for thievery - wanting that which is not your own.
- drunkards, - Those possessed by alcohol or drugs.
- revilers, - Those who are abusive to others.
- swindlers, - Extortionists.

shall inherit the kingdom of God.

IOW - these things characterize pagans/those who are lost in their sin. If those things characterize your life, you are no Christian.

2. Why is our culture filled with so much godless filth?

Because our culture is dominated by unbelievers!

I have a little furry animal. It weighs about 15 pounds. It has 4 legs and a long tail. It has whiskers and sharp claws. It even purrs when it's happy. What is it? A duck? A dog? A fish?

If it looks and acts like a godless pagan, guess what folks?

a. Does that mean we should expect nothing from those who are lost?

No civility, no morality? Not necessarily. Certainly there's a point where we expect men created in the image and likeness of God to act better than mere animals. But we can't expect too much from common grace. We know that common grace is sometimes dim, such as during times when the influence of the true church is low.

Apart from the salt and light of JC sinful men devolve into idolatrous, self-seeking pagans. That's what we're seeing today. Why Xnty gave rise to t/whole concept of "civilization." To be civilized is to be Xn.

It's like t/story of a soldier who came upon a civilized tribe of people. One of the tribesman had a Bible. The soldier remarked that back where he comes from enlightened people don't believe in the Bible. Tribesman replied, "Good thing that's not true here or you would be today's dinner."

Those who were once cannibals and ate one another are now transformed brethren who love one another.

b. No, we're not into moralism for moralism's sake

You can go to hell just as easily a religious, moral person, as you can a blaspheming atheist. We point people to Christ, not to morality, or so-called "values," or being good church attenders.

Read a true story about a former seminary professor who taught at a major evangelical seminary here in the US. He was getting a hair-cut and the barber who was cutting his hair was new and didn't know who he was or what he did.

And the barber was talking away and complaining about the state of things in the world and was peppering his speech with all sorts of obscenities. The professor sat there patiently. Finally, he couldn't take it any more and grabbed the barber's arm, pulled him around to the side of the chair. He grabbed his own earlobe and pulled on it and said to the barber: "Does this look like a sewer?" Needless to say, the rest of his hair was cut in silence.

BTW - I thought of this afresh last night when driving home I received a call about a vehicle I'm selling & t/prospective buyer in asking me questions and making comments must of used at least 20 colorful adverbs and adjectives in t/course of 5 or 10 minutes.

Yes! We get frustrated with the world. When I'm out with my family at a restaurant, I don't want to hear a group of young men (or women) in the next booth using all sorts of foul language.

Yes, that angers me. Yes, I may say something like, "You know, my wife and daughter are here and I'd appreciate it if you would tone it down."

We long for a culture that is steeped in Christian influence. Those days are gone. We live in a pagan nation.

The internet has made this more than evident. You can find any sort of vice, viewpoint, or vulgarity on the internet. If you look at websites that allow users to post their own "comments" you will notice two things about those comments. 1) people don't know how to spell or use grammar; 2) profanity. The two are related. It doesn't take a genius to use profanity, after all, what does it take to have a vocabulary that consists of words containing 4 letters or less?

While we should have basic rules and expectations for men created in the image of God, we cannot be shocked that pagans act like pagans.

Some of us once acted the same way. We were lost, but now are found. That's 1 Corinthians 6:11 ==> **And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.**

"The Spirit of Christ dropped into the soul enables it to leap over a wall." [Leighton, 181] Cf. Psalm 18:29.

c. If you weren't once like that, be thankful!

Remember we noted that Peter's readers were 1st generation Gentile Xns. They weren't raised in the moralistic culture of Israel. They didn't come from Christian homes. They all were saved out of the darkest of the dark kind of life.

If you were raised in a moral home, or a Christian home, or if you came to faith at a young age be thankful for that.

I know we all like to hear someone's testimony about how they were saved out of the depths of depravity. "I was into all kinds of drugs, or I was a member of the Mafia, or I was an atheist." I've had people tell me, *"I don't have a very exciting testimony. I was raised in a Christian home and was saved as a kid. About the wildest things I ever did was sneak a peak at my birthday presents and drink root beer."*

Give thanks for that! God spared you the heartaches and memories of a sin-filled life.

I wasn't raised in a Christian home or a particularly moral home. God saved my parents later in life.

I was telling someone the other day about how I hung out w/a bunch of drug-abusing Junior High Schoolers when I was that age. One friend had a father who destroyed his life with alcohol. His mother subsequently found another man who was quite immoral and had a stash of pornographic movies. This was before DVDs & VCRs & PCs. The old super 8 movies with no sound. But I remember a group of us gathered in my friend's house when his parents weren't home & watched several of these vile movies, including one that we thought was quite amusing that featured bestiality.

That was over 30 years ago & I can still see some of those images in my mind's eye.

Be thankful you don't have an "exciting testimony." Be thankful that God spared you from t/scars of sin.

What I'm saying is, "If God saved you out of that, be thankful." If God saved your while sparing you from that, "Be thankful." We were both spared the same eternal hell.

So we have to be faithful to the task of sharing the good news of Christ to all who will listen. Yes, most will stay pagans. They will laugh at us in surprise and shout at us with slander. But that's okay.

"To be laughed at is not great hardship to me. I can delight in scoffs and jeers. Caricatures, lampoons, and slanders are my glory. But that you should turn away from your mercy, this is my sorrow. Spit on me, but, oh, repent! Laugh at me, but, oh, believe in my Master! Make my body as the dirt of the streets, but damn not your own souls!" [C.H. Spurgeon]

Am I a soldier of the cross? A follower of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own His cause, Or blush to speak His name?

Sure I must fight if I would reign:--Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, Supported by Thy Word. [Isaac Watts]

3. Peter is drawing a contrast

a. Here in verse 3 he uses the word βούλημα - the intentions or purposes of lost sinful men

b. The contrast is to verse 2 where he uses the word θελήμα - the will of our Holy God

One group lives for themselves; the other group lives for X.
One group does their own thing; the other group does God's.

There is a marked difference between believers and unbelievers, between the regenerate and unregenerate. One lives for the will of God, the other for the will of self.

4. Arm yourself with this thought: any amount of past sinning is enough!

For the time already past is sufficient [for you] to have carried out the desires of the pagans . . .

You once made your pursuit in life things like ==>
. . . licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, partying, drinking binges, and lawless idolatries.

No more!

Sufficient time has past! No time to waste! Life is short, you've spent enough time in sin!

If you sinned a little before you believed, it's enough. If you sinned a lot and for many years before you believed, it's enough.

These are the things we once pursued in life. Now, we're engaged in t/pursuit of God's will and pleasure.

I. What Does it Mean to be Armed for the Purpose of Suffering?

A. We Have Clothed Ourselves With The Attitude of Christ (v 1a)

B. We Have Parted Ways With Our Past Life of Sin (v 1b)

C. We Are Engaged in the Pursuit of God's Will, Not Our Own (v 2)

D. We Know the Season for Sinning is Past (v 3)

Fifth (verse 4) ==>

E. We Walk Out Of Step With the World (v 4a)

I would think that this point would be self-evident by now. If we've {restate points A-D} - then we will most certainly be walking out of step with the world.

1. The Bible says much about our "walk"

By using that metaphor of walking t/Scripture is referring to how we live or our manner of life.

TAJ in his first epistle uses this metaphor 3x ==>

1 John 1:6-7 **If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

1 John 2:6 **the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in**

the same manner as He walked.

Perhaps more relevant to our context in 1 Peter, Paul, in Ephesians 4:17
This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the pagans also walk, in the futility of their mind,

If we don't walk as the world walks that means we are out of step with the world, right? We dance to a different tune. We swim against the stream.

When we are faithful in living lives of integrity t/response from t/world is going to be two-fold: Surprise & Slander - we see both in v. 4.

2. Surprise

In this they are ever surprised that you do not run with [them] into the same flood of debauchery . . .

a. The pagans are astonished that you are no longer like them

Implication is that they are not pleasantly surprised. No, they're angrily astonished.

Why?

Because you walk out of step. You don't live like they do. You don't
. . . run with [them] into the same flood of debauchery . . .

(1) Word debauchery - ἀσωτία

Related to the word for salvation only it has the alpha privative (letter "a" added to the front which negates it.

ἀσωτία = "unsavingness." One writer defines the idea as ==>
"that state in which a person's mind is so corrupt that he thinks about
nothing but evil and how he might indulge his sinful passions." [MacArthur]

The related word ἀσωτως is used of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:13,
where it is said that **he squandered his estate with loose living.**

(2) This isn't just a little sin

No, Peter says, it's a flood of depravity. Some translations render the
word as "excess" but it literally means "a pouring out," or "a flood."

I don't like floods. They scare me. I nearly drowned in the Salt River
NE of Phoenix, AZ when I was 12. Several of us experienced a real
flood while camping a few years back. But as dangerous is a flood of
water, an even greater danger is a flood of sin.

I can't help but wonder if, in using this word, Peter drawing a contrast
to 3:20 and t/Great Flood of Noah's day.

Rem. t/20th v. of chapter 3 where he refers to the flood, the waters of
which served as judgement on a sin-cursed world. Maybe there's a
twist here, a bit of irony that the flood brought judgment to sinful men
millennia ago, now men, ripe for judgement, are returning the favor w/a
flood of sin. Yet they won't escape final judgement (v. 5).

*E. To be armed for suffering - We Walk Out Of Step With
the World (v 4a)*

And when we do so we can be sure that, (our 6th point)

F. We Endure the Scorn of Men (v 4b-5)

Rem. I said that when we are faithful in living lives of integrity t/response from t/world is going to be two-fold: Surprise & Slander -

1. Here's the Slander

... [and] they blaspheme [you].

2. This is the third time that Peter has reminded us of this

Go back to 2:12 and 3:16.

a. Present Active Participle from βλασφημία

This isn't just one instance; this is continuous abuse.

abusive speech; gossip; insults; derogatory remarks; threats.

As children we learn the little rhyme: "Sticks and stone may break my bones but names will never hurt me."

I always thought that was wishful thinking. Names do hurt, don't they. Sometimes worse than sticks and stones do.

b. Endure the scorn

Luke 6:22-23 22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 "Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

As many of you know, my mom & dad live out of state. They are both believers & members of a CH near their home. Their CH has been under tremendous attack lately. Attacks from within as well as from without.

They are experiencing the firsthand reality of suffering.

Recently, a married couple in t/CH split up. For reasons not yet clear, the wife placed a legal order of protection against her distraught husband. My parents had opportunity to minister to him but were unable to contact her. Meanwhile, they learned that a neighbor, a middle-aged man who lives with his girlfriend and has children by her; a man who does drugs, doesn't have a job, blasphemes X & hates Xns became involved in this situation. He and his girlfriend have sort of taken over - and the wife, who is extremely weak and gullible has allowed this. What are these pagan neighbors interest in this? Very obviously, they believe there is money to be had.

The other day out of the blue the wife calls my dad. She agrees to go out with my parents to lunch. My parents go to her house to pick her up and who comes out the front door. Joe Pagan. Joe Pagan says, "She cannot see you, you'll have to go." My parents were forced to leave. But. Before they left this man, Joe Pagan, said to them: *"BTW - you Christians. There was a woman from your church here the other day and she came in here trying to do this and that and I told her off and I swore at her and used very name in the book and I blasphemed God. Boy oh boy,. I wish I had a recording of that. You could show it in your church. You would all be going crazy and throwing holy water on the walls."* My mom and dad politely informed them that this would not be possible since they weren't Catholic and therefore did not believe in holy water.

So here is a first-hand example of real persecution as a Christian in the United States. Men and women, darkened in their understanding, steeped in depravity, who hate us, hate X, hate the church, hate all that we stand for, and are not afraid to voice that hatred.

That shows itself in different ways for us. I mentioned a few weeks back an upcoming PBS special that will attempt to debunk the O.T. I learned yesterday of a new movie soon to be released featuring the rants of t/blasphemous comedian Bill Maher. A Michael Moore like documentary that proposes at all religion is detrimental.

Historically, here's where this goes. A small minority are vocal against Christians and are for the most part ignored. That's 1950s America. Meanwhile, the culture moves more and more away from Christian morals and that minority grows and starts to get organized. That's what happened in the 1960s. A generation later, the minority isn't such a minority any more and the bias against believers is now commonplace among those who are the most influential in a nation. And those that are younger are no longer inhibited from voicing their opposition which comes in the form of words, mockery, criticisms against Xns and against JC. Along with political actions that attempt to silence the church. All of this stops short of physical violence. That's where we are today.

But if we follow history, we can expect the CH to become a small minority among a very vocal and increasingly hostile majority and that majority will soon lose patience. Whatever you cannot silence without force must be silenced by force. It will start by making certain aspects of Christianity illegal. We see that happening right now. Hate crimes. Next, those that violate those laws will be fined, imprisoned, and ostracized. That will be followed by physical abuse. Bible teaching churches will be burned to the ground. Cars with Christian bumper stickers will be vandalized. Those holding a Bible will be mocked and spat upon.

Listen, that's only a few decades away here in the good ol' US of A.

That's what Peter's readers were experiencing. They were about 20

years ahead of us in the curve. IOW - they were facing open hostility, but it would only be a few years that the hostility would turn into outright physical violence against them.

3. But the reality behind the persecution is that they are in fact fighting against the One with Whom they will have give an account

What did our Lord tell t/persecuting Pharisee known as Saul in Acts chapter 9? **"It is me you are persecuting."**

When men ridicule us, God takes it personally. He will call them to an account, as Peter shows in the next verse ==>

But they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

The tables will be turned. Unless they repent (cf. 2:12), they will give an account for their "idle words" (cf. Matt. 12:36). They will stand mute before the One with Whom they have to do.

Phrase "Living & the dead" is an inclusio. Like t/phrase "heavens & the earth." In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. That means everything. Here, "living and the dead" means everyone.

IOW - You cannot escape God's judgement even by death.

Men do that, of course. Often we read of a criminal who takes his own life rather than face capture and sentencing. Little does he know that his death only ushers him into immediate judgement.

Death is no escape for the sinner.

Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed to men to die once and after that the judgment."

a. I take it here that the Judge in this case will be JC

N.T. indicates that t/Father has given t/right of judgement to t/Son.

JOH 5:22-23 "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him

A few verses later ==>

John 5:28-29 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good {deeds} to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil {deeds} to a resurrection of judgment.

So when you suffer wrongly, and you feel that someone "gets away with murder," leave it in the hands of God. He will judge justly the living and the dead. Arm yourselves with this assurance: it is better to suffer for doing right and to leave judgment to God.

ECC 12:14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil

ROM 12:17-21 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath {of God,} for it is written, "\Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,\\" says the Lord. 20 "\But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.\\" 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

To do so is to be well-armed for the purpose of suffering.