

How To Be

Armed With The Mind Of Christ

1 Peter 4:1-6

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I. Arm Yourself

“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” (1 Peter 4:1).

Imitating Jesus

On a number of occasions Peter has called his readers to imitate Jesus. He continues to do so here. We have been told that we should imitate in our attitudes toward suffering the mind Christ had toward His suffering. He did not threaten, nor revile or seek personal vengeance but committed Himself into the hands of His Father (1 Peter 2:23).

Living to God

Peter will now go further and give, as it were, the spiritual explanation of his exhortation. This knowledge is a weapon with which we are to arm ourselves.

For Jesus, death was a passage to life. Though sinless, Jesus lived in the likeness of sinful flesh, took upon Himself the sins of men and suffered the due penalty for that sin which was wrath and death. But that is not the end of the story, nor is it the end of the example provided by Jesus. Romans 6, a suitable cross-reference for this entire passage, states of Jesus, **“For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.**¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:10,11). In the same way Jesus contended with sin, the battle being won, He is done with sin and now lives to God. We are to follow that process.

Spiritual Baptism

If we backtrack to the beginning of Romans 6 we might see the process clearly laid before us.¹

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should

¹ At the end of chapter three Peter mentioned spiritual baptism. I think we will find Romans 6:1-14 a suitable cross-reference to the passage before us.

walk in newness of life.⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:1-6).

We were baptized into His death in which our old man died. Of course, merely killing the old man wouldn't avail much if there wasn't a new man to come to life. According to Paul this new man has new qualities. In the same way the Christ was raised from the dead, the new man should walk in newness of life. The old man is crucified that he should no longer be a slave to sin.

A Passive Break With Sin

Getting back to the verse before us, Peter writes, **“he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”** There are a couple of important observations to be made regarding this statement. First of all it is the perfect tense, which indicates the break with sin occurred in the past and continues into the future. Secondly, it is in the passive voice which literally means ‘he has been released from sin’. This means that God is the implied agent providing the freedom. Again, if we cross-reference Romans 6:7 **“For he who has died has been freed from sin.”** So Jesus isn't merely providing an example but actually effecting a change in the object of His grace. He is freed from the dominion of sin. Though the struggle with sin remains, sin is no longer his master. The Christian is no longer enslaved to do his old master's bidding. Peter continues to write,

Inclines Man's Heart as Savior and Lord

“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” (1 Peter 4:2).

When Jesus saves someone, He doesn't merely incline the person's heart toward Himself as Savior but as Lord also.² The person who is saved will begin to say, with David, **“Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the LORD! ² Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart” (Psalm 119:1,2).** Let us all be cautioned, if the grace of God is upon us, if we have genuinely sought our Savior, sin will be an object of disdain and our desire will be, though tainted and laden with failure, to serve God.

II. Enough of That

“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” (1 Peter 4:3).

² This is the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ.

Giving Sin Another ‘Shot’

By “the will of the Gentiles” Peter means unbelievers. Christians should not be tempted to look back on their pre-Christian lives with a sort of personal self-envy. We should not be tempted to give a life of sin another ‘shot’. But rather we should recognize that we have already spent enough, in fact too much, time living a life dishonoring to God and destructive to ourselves and others. We should pray that God would grant us the wisdom to perceive the folly and shallowness of the sinful life. Peter mentions a few examples:

Lewdness – which means no regard for moral restraint, especially acts of sexual immorality or violence.

Lusts – which refer to sinful human desires which dominate our behavior.

Drunkenness – people who allow their drinking to become excessive.

Revelries – which refers to drunken and riotous behavior.

Drinking parties – referring to carousing and the like.

Abominable idolatries – which refers to criminal behavior.

Flood of Dissipation

As you can see Peter’s examples are not typical of the normal Christian’s battle with sin but rather the example of one who has given in to their own carnal and sinful impulses. The next verse is very tell-tale.

“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*” (1 Peter 4:4).

They Think it Strange

No honest person would think it strange that Christians might struggle with sin to some degree. But what does seem strange to the unregenerate person is when their former drinking partner or party buddy no longer gives in to unrestrained indulgence. A person, who by outward observation, might have been relatively moral perhaps wouldn’t elicit this response by unbelievers after conversion (although those who know them closely should begin to notice observable changes.) Peter here is addressing those who, at one time, engaged in a profligate (completely lacking in self-restraint) lifestyle who have repented of that way of living. Their old friends think it to be strange but not only that. There something else to be expected – sinful accusations.

Speaking Evil

Even silent non-participation can result in sinful accusations. When the consciences of sinful and faithless men are pained they have no place to dispose of their guilt. So accusations, where true or false – the spreading of rumors, perhaps half-truths or

the sins of a person's past – or the dotting and amplification of the faults of those seeking to follow Christ become their place of self-justification and refuge. Christians can easily, at this point, become tempted to play the same game. In defense of self we might seek to point out the faults in our accusers. I would encourage you to avoid this tactic. If someone points out a sin in your life of which you have not repented, repent. But accusations leveled against Christians by the world should not bring us into that arena of behavior. Rather, we should pray for them for Peter discusses their fate.

III. Giving An Account

“They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Peter 4:5).

Again, as we seek to imitate Christ, we do not retaliate, but continually commit ourselves into the hands of Him who judges righteously. I don't have to take justice into my own hands nor fear that it will never be served. These people in fact need to hear the gospel, as Peter points out in the next verse.

“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” (1 Peter 4:6).

This verse might mean a couple of things. It might mean that all men receive a type of judgment in the flesh since all men die. Though those who have positively responded to the preaching of the gospel will live in the spirit. Or more likely it means that there were many Christians who heard the gospel, believed in it, were martyred according to the judgments of men but live according to God in the spirit.

Summary

Christians are to arm themselves with the mind of Christ. We are to recognize that we have been baptized into His death and renewed into a newness of life.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of God,*⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The old life is to be left behind and we have been brought out of the bondage of sin and become slaves of righteousness which yields fruit and life everlasting. We should not allow our own lusts or the behavior of sinful men to sidetrack us from this high calling. If the gospel has been preached to you the judgments of men should become of little or no consequence. For the harshest courts of men cannot overpower the gracious acquittal of God. An acquittal found only in the person of Jesus who is our reason for hope.