

Gear Up To Fight Temptation

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[0 : 00] As we begin this morning, I was thinking about the passage we're going to look at, which is in the first verses of chapter four. I was thinking back to when I worked in campus ministry.

And one of the campuses I worked at, there was an athlete's Bible study that I got to do for two years. And it was a great group. A new believer, a few church kids, one or two really strong believers, one person who was seeking, didn't know where they stood with Jesus.

And, you know, it was fascinating to hear some of them talk about their experiences as college athletes trying to be faithful to Jesus. One girl shared about how literally every weekend her boyfriend said, Hey, is this the weekend that we get to sleep together?

Just like, why not? You know, what's wrong with this? Can't we do this? Every weekend, this was the question, right? Another guy who was, his teammates, every weekend were like, Hey, what are you going to get this weekend?

As he went out into the campus, this was the question. And every weekend, as they gathered again on Monday, be like, Hey, how'd it go? And he's like, it didn't go. But the pressure that they faced every week, week in and week out, to walk with Jesus, not just in that context, but also just the parties, the lack of constraint, the emphasis on drinking beyond what you could handle or control, was an ongoing pressure for them.

[1 : 39] The world pressed in on them on a daily basis to live not for Christ, but for the passions of their hearts.

Their friends would ask them questions like this. What's wrong with the way we live? Are you judging us by not doing this? You're so intolerant. Is it really worth it to do what you do? What are you saving yourself for? What's wrong with you? You're so weird. Who's going to care? Honestly, who's going to care what you do or don't do? Now, I don't know how much you've experienced that in your life.

Maybe some of you have. Maybe this is what happens when you go with your family to Memorial Day family reunion. Maybe this is what it looks like at the employee Christmas party.

Maybe this is what it looks like when your lab workers or cohort go out for drinks at the end of a long day of study. Or maybe it's mom's night out where you finally get to let loose a little bit.

[2 : 45] Maybe it's going away to academic or work conferences. And everyone goes with the what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas mindset. And you're thinking, what do I do with all this?

Maybe you're a young person and you see what flies across social media on Snapchat and TikTok and those things I don't really know anything about, but I hear they're... But not only what people share, but also what people request that you would share with them.

Or maybe you're even younger than that, but you're in school and the pressure is to just think about how can we deceive the teacher? How can we hide from them? How can we do something else?

There are so many ways in which we face certain kinds of pressures to live, not for God, but for other things. And you know, sometimes, I don't know if you're like this, but if you're a Christian here today and you're thinking, you know, I'd like to figure out how to do that.

And you look at Jesus and you think, Jesus did it so easily. You read the Gospels and he was just perfect at it. He never screwed up. He never messed up. He always did the right thing.

[3 : 56] But we find it difficult. And so either we engage and feel like we're going to fail or we withdraw and say, we're not going to do... We're going to avoid all of that completely. Wherever you're at this morning, I think our passage has lots to teach us about what it means to live in a relationship with God.

Our passage speaks to a Christian church that was living in a culture not that dissimilar from ours. Here's what a commentator, Karen Jobes, writes about the first century context in a Roman empire.

It says, The pleasures from which Christians in the first century typically abstained were the popular forms of Roman entertainment, the theater with its risqué performances, the chariot races, the gladiatorial fights with their blood and gore.

Christian lifestyle in the first century also condemned the other pleasures, the quote-unquote pleasures of an indulgent temper, sex outside marriage, drinking, slander, lying, covetousness, and theft.

These attitudes towards the contemporary Roman customs and morals earned Christians the reputation of being haters of humanity and traitors to the Roman way of life.

[5 : 12] So Peter is writing to people who know these pressures as well. And he writes to them, remember the theme verse of the book of 1 Peter is in chapter 2.

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles, that means among the broader unbelieving world, honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

That's the broad exhortation of the whole book of 1 Peter. And we're going to look at what Peter says specifically in this passage. What he's going to tell us is, gear up.

Gear up for the life that God has called you to. And the questions are, gear up with what and why? And that's what we're going to look at. So if you want to look at this passage, 1 Peter chapter 4, starting in verse 1, we'll read verses 1 through 6.

Since then 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.

[6 : 36] The time that has passed 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.

Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you for this word. We thank you for a chance to gather this morning and to hear your word and to sit under it. God, we pray for your help. We pray for your grace.

We pray for your spirit to be at work. Lord, that you would enable me to speak clearly, that you would, Lord, turn our hearts to you, that we would be ready to receive your word.

And Lord, that in receiving, we may be strengthened and encouraged to know you, to see the glory of the way that you have called us to live as we follow Jesus.

[7 : 47] And we pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. So as we look at this passage, as we examine this, structurally, it's kind of simple.

There's one main command, and then there are three implications or three aspects of how that plays out. And so if you're taking notes, that's our outline. One command, three aspects of, that are gonna answer the questions.

Gear up with what? And gear up, and why do we need to do it? So let's look at this in turn. Verse one. Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves.

There's the same way of thinking for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. What does he see? The central command is this. Gear up. Arm yourselves.

And the word here is a great, it's a, the word is actually hoplite. It's the same thing for the hoplite soldiers. And they had helmets and breastplates and shields and armaments of spears and swords, and they had greaves on their shins to protect them.

[8 : 50] And Peter is saying, put on this armor. But he's not talking about physical armor. He's not talking about protecting our bodies. He's talking about protecting our souls.

And he says, what are we gonna gear up with? We're supposed to gear up with a frame of mind. First Peter said, in this verse, it says the same way of thinking. What is this same, what is this way of thinking that Peter is saying?

We are to have the same way of thinking that Christ had as he suffered while he was on earth. This was Christ who came to obey God perfectly, enduring the scorn, the shame, the rejection, so that he might be our savior and our deliverer, who for the joy set before him, endured the cross,

despising its shame.

And this is what Peter says. We're to say, look at Jesus, because he willingly entered into a life where he would experience this suffering. And you need to gear yourself up with the same mindset of being prepared to suffer for obedience that Jesus did.

Now, the end of verse one probably surprised you, just like it surprises me, as when I read it the first time. What does this mean? For whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.

[10:23] Well, what can it not mean? Well, it can't mean that if we suffer, we no longer sin at all, sin at all during this life. It can't mean, well, now that I've suffered once, I am no longer prone to sin.

Nor can it mean that sin, that suffering purifies us, because we all know that suffering sometimes, rather than purifying us, it embitters us, it hardens us, it makes us more angry.

So it can't mean those things. So what does it mean? Wayne Grudem in his commentary says this, whoever has suffered for doing right and has still gone on obeying God in spite of the suffering it involved has made a clean break with sin.

When Jesus came, he said, Lord, I have come to do your will. And what Peter's saying here is, we're to arm ourselves with that same attitude. I am no longer enslaved to sin because of Christ. As a Christian, I have been brought into a new place and my determination is to no longer live for those things, but to live for something else. We have chosen Christ over a life of sin.

[11:37] And though imperfectly in our living out of that, there is a fundamental picture here that Peter is saying, that when we have chosen to follow Christ, we've said, no longer will we walk in the ways of sin.

We will turn away from it. And we will obey and follow God even when it means suffering. This is Peter's exhortation, to arm ourselves with this attitude.

Now, what does it look like to do this? How do we enter into this? Well, I'll tell you what, friends, I've been wrestling with this all week because what I really want is three steps. Here are three easy steps.

You do these three things and it's gonna happen. Thank you, Suzanne. I appreciate that. Right? We want a list of to-dos and there isn't one. How do we arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ? It's this simple and this hard. We meditate on Christ himself. We read the scriptures daily. We let it lead us to Christ. And if you're not sure how to do that, go back to our website, look at the last Sunday school class that Laura Bush just taught on Bible reading and scripture meditation and let it fuel your practice of meditating on scripture so that it will lead you to a clear vision of God and a clear vision of Christ.

[12:58] Look to him, remember him every day. Cling to his promises. See his faithfulness. Fix your eyes on him. This is how we arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ.

We look at him with our hearts, with our minds every day. It's that simple and that difficult. So Peter says, arm yourselves with this attitude.

And then there are three facets, three things that Peter says about why this is so important. So in verses two and three, Peter says, arm yourselves so that we can follow the will of God amidst temptations.

Right? Verse two says, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh, no longer for human passions, but for the will of God, the time that has passed suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.

Peter says, we need to arm ourselves so that we can do what we want to do, which is follow God, and not do what we don't want to do, which is fall into temptation. Right?

[14:10] Peter's presenting this picture that I've already started with, that there's a before and after that should be true of the Christian life. Before I was enslaved to sin, I didn't know anything else, and whether I was profligate and completely over the top in drunkenness and orgies, or whether I simply lived a proud, self-righteous, self-serving life, I lived for myself.

Now I have something else to live for. And this is the distinction he's saying. He's saying, as Christians, you want to arm yourself so that you can live the life that you want to live and that God has called you to live.

Right? And Peter says, we need to do this because we know that there's a temptation to fall back into the old ways that we used to live. And then he lists them.

And I just want to say, if you think I'm picking on sex and drinking today, I am. But it's not my fault. It's what the Bible says. It's what all of these five verses relate to as they're talking in the first

century Roman context.

It's saying these are some of the common human patterns of how we live for self-centered human pleasure and satisfaction rather than for God.

[15 : 28] Right? Because God, in fact, created us for pleasure and he created us to be satisfied. But in our fallen nature, we take the things that he gives us, we exalt them to this place of idolatry, and we worship them and they end up controlling us.

And so our passions and our pleasures control us. And sex and drink are two of the historically most prominent ways in which these things have been expressed in human history.

Right? And we need to not be afraid of our post-evangelical, post-fundamentalist reaction to legalism to say so.

We need to be self-controlled in the areas of how we live out our sexuality and our drinking. And we need to not play around by thinking, oh, I'm past that legalism.

I can do this and be safe. We need to be wise. We need to be shrewd in how we do this. But we also want to look deeper because we recognize that sex and drinking are two expressions of a deep heart position.

[16 : 35] One commentary says, all five of these terms refer to practices that have in common a lack of self-control, a character flaw, leading to behaviors that are self-destructive violation of God's standards and harmful to others.

What does that look like in our lives? Well, I thought of a couple. They're all electronic, I'll be honest with you. One is social media and the way that our addiction to and use of social media, how often is it characterized by a lack of self-control, a character flaw leading to behaviors that are self-destructive and harmful to others?

I think of the number of men and women who are addicted to pornography and who look daily, weekly, express this sensual desire, this sexual desire in a destructive place.

I think that there are ways in which for some of us something like computer games and the addiction that that can cause and the way that it can separate us from from real relationships with the people around us.

However our screens act in our life, often they fall into this self-centered, lack of self-control, destructive patterns.

[18 : 13] It's not the only way, but I think we want to think about this. We want to recognize that in our fallenness we have these disordered desires. We look for good things and we look for them in the wrong places.

We long for intimacy and pleasure and joy and meaning, significance and relief and comfort, but we look for them in the wrong places. And as we do so, we fall back into the old patterns of life of someone who doesn't know God and we miss the calling that God has for us.

And Peter knows. Peter is not being hard. He knows how difficult it is. We know how difficult it is, how easy it is to fall into the old ways. We know it's easier because the old ways are familiar.

We used to do that. I know how that works. I know that that works in a moment. That's going to make me feel better. I want to do that. Sometimes we get weary of just feeling different and we just get tired of no one understanding why we live the way we do.

Sometimes we just get lazy. We're just like, I don't want to have to work so hard anymore.

Sometimes in the midst of suffering, we fall into self-pity.

[19 : 33] We've suffered so much. Can't God just give me a break? Can't I have just this one little thing even though I know it's not what he wants and it's not good for me? Sometimes it's as simple as we just don't want to live boring lives.

We know we're meant to live passionate lives and we don't quite know what it looks like to live passionately for God so we look at the world and we think that looks like a lot of passion and a lot of fun.

But God has called us to spend these passions that he has given us, this passionate heart that he's created in us for something else, for the will of God. This is what Peter has been talking about this whole book and we want to just, I just want to remind you, he tells us to live such good lives and to suffer for doing good because it's the way that God has made us to be, to live distinctly in the world as God's chosen people so that we might reflect the glory of his grace, so we might reflect the hope of the inheritance that we have secure for us in heaven, in heaven, so that we might know the love of Christ that has been poured out in our hearts and display that in the world.

God has called us to do this, to be ready, to take up this challenge of forging a new way to honor God in our particular circumstances and to live with gospel-shaped relationships.

Some of the hard passages we've wrestled with in the last month have talked about how do we navigate this in the realms of politics and family and race? How do we do this well? But remember, this is what God's calling us to.

[21 : 10] How do we honor him in every circumstance? How do we live for him? And Peter's reminding us that there is something worth our passions and is living for the will of God.

So this is the first reason we're to arm ourselves, so that we no longer fall back into the old ways, but so that we're ready to face those temptations and pursue the thing that we know God wants.

Verses 4 and 5 give us a second reason.

Let's look at it again. 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 an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Peter knows that turning from the old ways to a new way is hard and the dynamic of every adult convert in the world knows this challenge because the people you used to know and the things you used to do are now things that you no longer want to do and you're trying to figure out how do I relate to these people without continuing to run with them and doing the things that they do.

This is why he says join with them in the same flood of debauchery. Just there's this wide road of really easy living and that's what you know and it's what you're familiar with and yet when you come to Christ there's meant to be a change, a shift, a transition and these create tensions and if you've walked through this you know your friends are hurt.

[22 : 44] They're confused. confused. What happened to you? Where did my friend go? We used to do these things together. We used to go and get drunk on Friday night together and now I don't know you and I don't know how to have a relationship with you apart from these things.

Not only are they confused and surprised but often they feel condemned. You're judging me aren't you? You think I'm doing it wrong.

And often then that turns to as Peter says here maligning or reviling.

You're self-righteous. You're a bigot. Why do you hate me now? You're so holier than now. Why are you so judgmental?

I know some of you have felt these pressures. You've heard those words spoken to you. And I think that we feel a greater pressure because in this era in this stage of the church one of the things we long to be is a winsome church.

[23 : 52] We want to be a church that wins people's affections. We want to love well enough. We want to be gentle and gracious enough. We think that if we do those things well enough somehow people are going to accept us and welcome us and celebrate us or at least respect us.

Peter reminds us that that's not true. These two worlds, these two ways are divergent. They're going in different directions and there is a conflict between them and this conflict is inevitable and maybe it doesn't happen in every relationship and it doesn't happen in every circumstance but recognize that this is normal that this will be a part of following Jesus.

the conflict will happen and look we're still called to be loving winsome gentle patient and kind.

We don't forsake doing that because quote unquote it doesn't work. We do that because it's the way we follow Christ but recognize that we're not always going to get the thing that we I think we hope for which is when we do that then people won't hate us.

Peter is reminding us that is not true. And we know that that pressure that fear of blowback that fear of those negative responses and conflict to us we know that that's a high pressure for us to just go along.

[25 : 24] We know that the negative response may come and we say I'm just going to be silent I don't want to deal with people just going at me today. Sometimes we just go along it's like well God will understand I'm just going to I'm just going to do it because it's too hard.

Peter reminds us however in verse 5 of why we can have confidence to stand up to that kind of pressure. Because he reminds us as he turns a corner he says he reminds us that look those people and their judgment of you their condemnation of you is not the final word on your life.

Peter says lift up your eyes and look and see because you know what they and their judgments will ultimately sit under a greater judgment. They will face the one God himself who is the judge of the living and the dead that means people who are already dead and people who are alive today and all

people will be judged universally by God.

and what will happen is those who revile you for doing good for following Christ will be shown at the last day to be wrong. They will be shown to have misunderstood what is right and wrong in the world and you who follow Christ faithfully will be vindicated because of Christ.

This is the implication. living differently will always feel awkward and it will at times make us feel like the whole world hates us and condemns us and judges us but just like it did with Christ so we will know that the end of this story is not that judgment but ultimately the vindication that comes with Christ as he judges the whole world.

[27 : 16] So Peter says gird up your mind. See this long term view know what Christ was looking at as he suffered and look to those things so that in the face of temptation with the great pressures that you feel even the either the pull in your heart or the fear of others that these things gird up your mind with this long term view so that you may walk with God and follow his will.

So that's the second reason why we're to arm ourselves. Verse 6 is the third one that we are to arm ourselves so that we remember our gospel mission and hope.

Verse 6 is not an easy one we'll get into it in a minute but let's read it. This is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead though judged in the flesh the way people are they might live in the spirit the way God does.

Now this is explanatory this is explaining this long term view and saying here's more explanation about why this is important but what does it actually say?

Now some people in the history of the church have seen this verse as grounds for post-mortem conversion. What that means is that somehow some way after we die we can still hear the gospel and turn to God and after death is a really good time to do that because we can live our whole life no matter how we it doesn't matter and then we die and then we see how bad death is and then we think wow that'd be great.

[28 : 48] So we have in our human heart we long for second chances we long to know that this life isn't all there is and maybe God can like can rescue it even after the fact and some of us do this because we have lost loved ones and we long for them to have a second chance but the scriptures don't give us that second chance.

Hebrews 9 17 says that we are to to die once and then to face judgment there is no second chances this life is what we have in God's sovereignty this is what we're meant to live with the reason why I say this and the reason why I believe that verse 6 is not saying that is actually the key words the living and the dead and the way that they're used in verse 5 in verse 5 it says they will give an account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead that is all people everywhere the people who have already died and the people who are living now right he's not talking about spiritually living and spiritually dead he's not talking about the people who died in the days of Noah there are a lot of really interesting things in verse 5 it's clear that he's talking about all people right and in verse 6 then he's saying the same thing the dead in verse 6 right the gospel is preached the dead is the gospel was preached to people who heard the gospel when they were alive and now they are done now they have died they are physically dead people that's what it means why is Peter saying this well because in the first century the Roman culture around would say okay you believe in Jesus you're going to be resurrected to an eternal life well look at Joe here

Joe died last month and what is he? worm food he's just dead what good is it to follow Christ and to suffer if all you're going to do is die just like everyone else and Peter says this is why the gospel is so important this is why we preach the gospel urgently while we can because in this life God is using the preaching of the gospel to call people to life with him and to hope and what he's saying is Joe who put his faith in Christ even though his body is in the ground he will be raised to new life right?

this is what the end of the verse says though judged in the spirit or judged in the flesh they died just like everyone else yet they will be raised by the spirit in this with God in the spirit of God and so they have a great hope and this is why the gospel is so urgent and this is why the hope of the gospel is so good because if we suffer in this life for no hope then it does seem like a waste doesn't it?

we might as well just live it up but in fact because we have this gospel hope because we have this new direction that God has called us in because we have this kingdom that is coming because we have this new place of being God's people and a future of living with God in his perfect all satisfying glorious kingdom forever this is what Peter wants us to take hold of and to arm ourselves with what good is it living holy lives?

[32 : 22] because it means we continue with Christ till the end and as we continue with Christ till the end we have this glorious hope and in the meantime we take hold of this gospel message and we not only take hold of it for ourselves but we preach it to everyone else so that before they die they can too turn from sin and know the glorious hope of the gospel friends this passage has a great comfort and a great sting the comfort is that in Christ we will live in the spirit a resurrection and a victory awaits us no matter what the cost is now no matter what suffering we may walk through to be faithful to Christ at the end of the day we will rise victorious with Christ and for beleaguered and weary Christians this is great hope but there is a sting as well for those who continue being controlled by human passions for those who in their rejection of God and rejection of Christ continue apart from that hope seeking their life here in this world those who revile believers who malign them who condemn them for their faithful living there is not a second chance once you are dead you are dead indeed and then you will face judgment and we need to soberly hear that to recognize that for us for our neighbors for us to think about how we might hold forth the hope that we have within us as Peter says in chapter 3 verse 15 so friends brothers and sisters arm yourselves arm yourselves with Christ's mindset so that you might pursue the life that God has called you to knowing that it will be a battle knowing that it is not an easy call it is a hard call but that the end is good and as we gird ourselves up for it we will be prepared for what comes let's pray together

Lord Jesus we ask now Lord that you would remind us fill our hearts and our minds with the glorious truths of Christ so that we might arm ourselves with the same attitude that he had Lord I pray that if there are those here this morning Lord who have fallen into old ways while claiming to follow Christ Lord I pray that they would know the richness of your grace and mercy that Lord your call to repentance Lord is always open for us to turn back to you and to forsake those things and to know your gracious acceptance and your empowering presence to help us live the new life that you've called us to Lord I pray for those this morning who may not know you who may be exploring you Lord that they would hear Lord the urgency of the gospel
Lord that they would hear the good news and respond Lord I pray this morning that for all of us you would make us wise to the temptations and the pull of this world that we live in Lord that we would gird ourselves up to live differently because of you we pray this in Jesus name Amen we in we■