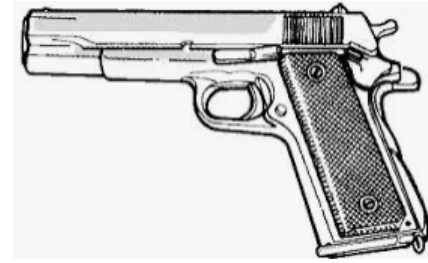


**1 Peter 4:1-6**  
Hope in the storm

*Arm Yourself (with the right attitude)*



I heard that gun shops have been selling out. A hotly contested election; forces of anarchy loose in the country on the side of both political extremes; the second amendment in jeopardy; upheaval; threats; and many people have been getting ready for a civil war for some time now! Survival gear is flying off the online shelves – especially this year as people realize how fragile our way of life is, and how quickly something so tiny as a virus can jeopardize, or an anarchy we are unfamiliar with can set us back, or even destroy, mainly by setting us against ourselves! I don't know how serious of a threat this really is right now, but we will see, I guess. Both sides now are saying “*arm yourselves*”! Antifa, which has previously used only the violence of fists, clubs, bricks, and the screaming of chants and slogans to intimidate its political foes, now has voices calling for Antifa to buy guns. Of course, I hope you knew that it had to go there at some point! The militia groups in this country are much more self-isolating/secretive, but they have been brandishing their weapons for decades, seeming waiting for this day!

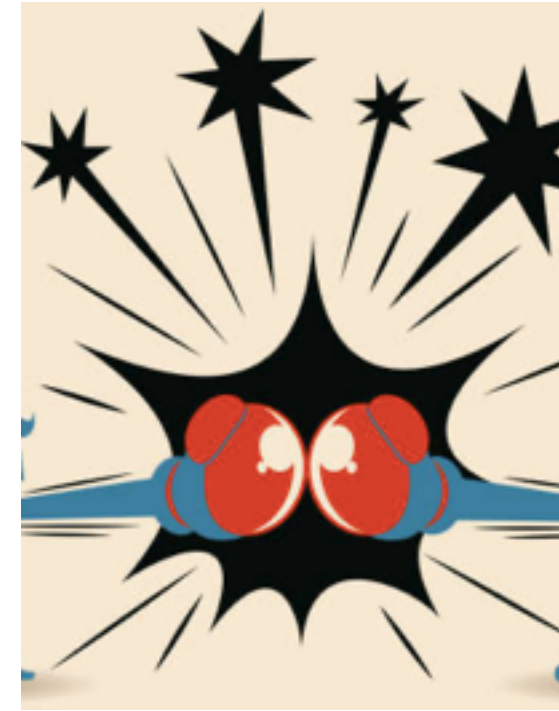


VS.



Interestingly, we run into this very phrase in this passage! Except it doesn't mean anything like what it means out there in the world. We still have the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment right in this country to bear a weapon, a gun for instance, for personal protection or to protect others, but that is **NOT** what the apostle is referring to. Jesus once told Peter to bring a sword along in preparation for a trip, I suppose to deter highway robber from accosting them on the road. But it was different when Jesus and His disciples were being targeted by anti-Christ forces! Peter was often targeted by his enemies and by hostile government and religious forces! You would think that he had the right to protect himself, right? Well, yes, he had the right, but did not use that right. The phrase “*arm yourselves*” is used here in the context of arming ourselves with **ATTITUDE**! More specifically, that we would have the same attitude toward suffering that Jesus obviously had *when ... He ... went ... to ... the ... cross!!* It is an attitude of giving up your life – of surrendering/succumbing to the will of God in the midst persecution, even execution – in a time when your life and well-being are in jeopardy, and you are giving yourselves over into the hands of Almighty God, and resting there!

This is a theme of this apostle, in both his books, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. How to suffer, or more specifically, what to suffer for and what not to suffer for. Suffering was a constant companion for the early Christian. Their lives were forever in jeopardy of suffering some kind of persecution. Their homes and livelihoods were never secure. The freedom and even the lives of church leadership were forever threatened. Peter himself had suffered plenty during the ministry of Jesus and especially after. He probably had had to flee Jerusalem after a decade or two, and church tradition has it that he ended up in Rome as the bishop of the church there. Paul does not really mention Peter in his letter from prison while Paul was in prison in Rome, around the early 60s AD. So who knows. A few centuries after Christ, unscrupulous men in the church took the liberties of making stories up about the first apostles that were advantageous to the position and control of the Roman church over the churches spread around the known world. They felt that they needed apostolic authority to maintain and wield that power and control over the church in general or it would disintegrate into chaos, and so they may have made the story of Peter up on scanty evidence, or certainly added to it. They certainly made up the idea of Peter's "mantle" being passed to each successive bishop of Rome, or as they became to be known – "pope". And then the pope became "the voice of God on earth", whose decrees superseded even scripture itself. But the issue of whether Peter was *ever* actually even the Bishop of Rome will be forever "up in the air".



At any rate, Peter was admonishing the Christians everywhere that they would face persecution and troubles, but that if that was to be, (and it was) it should not be for bad behavior – for rebellion against the government, or rebellion of slaves against their masters, or the miserable nightmare of rebellion and bad behavior in their marriages, or the bleak and stressful troubles from fighting amongst themselves in the church! He says to count trouble, when it comes, as an honor and a privilege, because in suffering for Christ we get to identify with Christ's sufferings on the cross – the greatest honor that can be bestowed upon a person! But it is only honorable *only* if we are suffering for doing good – or in other words – doing the work of God! Otherwise its just us getting what we deserve! Needed -humility of Christ



Suffering usually has the effect of humbling us and forcing us to re-examine our behavior, our priorities, our attitude. In fact, our whole life comes under review in our own mind when we become the most helpless! Our pride is knocked off its feet, and that's a good thing! God ***hates*** human pride! In His Bible, He declares that He ***opposes*** the proud! Pride is the foundation of original sin, so it is the well-spring of rebellion against God and the setting up of our own selves as little pseudo gods –because we feel strong enough, even god-like enough, to run our own lives – to make our own decisions without anyone's input – ***especially*** God's! But that is a disastrous decision in this life - where it proves to be ruinous to the quality of our brief life on this earth, but certainly it is infinitely ruinous to the quality of our life in the next life – in eternal life! For most people, eternity will be a place of terrible suffering and anxiety where there is no redeeming effect upon the character of the individual! But I'm getting off track. What I am saying is that the proud will never come to Jesus and ask Him for His salvation. Neither will they give Him first place in their lives. That place is already occupied/filled,.. with themselves! But suffering on this earth can empty a person of pride, and this often ***must*** happen before a person can even really consider the possibility of humbling themselves before God! Suffering has a way of redirecting our thought process from the seeking of illegitimate and sinful pleasures to the seeking of God and to seeking His will. After our confidence in our own power is shaken, we are much more open to the introduction of God, and of God's will in our life. THAT is what Peter is referring to here. Suffering on a fallen and rebellious planet is used by the Creator/God to turn our hearts toward Him! He does not necessarily cause our suffering, but He is certainly not above using it to our advantage! Suffering builds character, and character is something the Christ-follower always needs more of! Romans 5:3-5]

James 4:6 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."



In verse 3, Peter takes his reader back to their lives before they gave their hearts to Jesus. They too had once conformed to the patterns of their hedonistic/pleasure-seeking cultures. Of course they had – because they had not known any better! But now that they were not involved in that lifestyle any longer, their friends and family were offended, disappointed that they had lost a companion – a drinking buddy, as it were – a partner in crime that back in the day would have encouraged them to do their worst! So, now that their Christian friend wasn't running with the fast crowd any longer - the committed pagan revelers - the committed Christ-followers were being criticized and made fun of by the very crowd of revelers they used to run with - that they used to abuse themselves with! They had gone from being “friends” to being enemies in a very short time - and if not really enemies, then at least not friends any longer! If those friends had rejected these Christ-follower's testimony regarding Jesus, then these old party-animals simply could not understand why these Christians could not have any fun any longer! These partyers thought their former friend (or friends) had gone off the deep end and become a part of a crazy religious cult of moral zealots, simply because they had turned their backs on the party life. Now, does this sound familiar to some of you? I know it does! Many of you have felt the sting of criticism and rejection by family members or former friends since you “changed” and stopped partying and started living for Jesus! You've lived this scenario! But Peter says that *they* will have to give an account of how they wasted their lives on the ultimately miserable quest of gluttony, of getting wasted, of abusing their sexuality, and of getting deeper and deeper into *any* kind of pleasures seeking – usually needing darker and darker activities to stimulate the pleasure center of the brain at the same level. \*It is like being on drugs. The longer you are on them, the worse you feel – the more you have to take to get the same high, and the more damage it does to your mind and body. So Peter says that one day these people are going to have to answer to God the Judge for their “dissipation” – for what they have done with their lives - the useless expenditure of their life energies in the hedonistic pursuit of pleasure!



They will have to answer for the total waste of their lives, living it outside of the grace of God, but the Christ-follower will not. The Christ-follower will not be judged and condemned for what they have done, but judged in the light of what Christ has done for us! The Christ-follower is covered by the grace and the love of God. We have placed ourselves in the care of the Son of God. He has accepted the responsibility to protect us in Himself, and while we can and will be judged and ridiculed by the people of this world, we cannot be judged and condemned by God! That is Peter's assurance to God's people! It is what Jesus had taught Him He would do for His people, and He trusted the word of Jesus implicitly!



**Vs. 6** – There is admittedly some weird wording in this verse, but I would advise us to not make more out of it than is there! This does not assert that the spirits of the dead were preached to in hells or hell! It does not, in my mind, say that Jesus descended into hell to preach to the spirits of the dead to save some of them. If you look closely, that is not what it says here, and neither is it inferring this foreign theory. I think this is just a simple acknowledgment that the gospel has always been preached on earth. In salvation history, even the earliest human beings have been warned by God not to misuse their lives (God's admonition to Cain – **[Gen. 4:6]**). He has always given all human beings consciences to know the difference between good and evil and the ability to measure and assess its polar opposite effects upon life on earth! Unless people are true sociopaths incapable of caring about the pain they cause others, the vast majority of people know. Sociopaths are relatively rare! So the rest the people, specifically people who hurt people a lot, are just extremely selfish people who have chosen to ignore their moral compass to get what they want. They practice doing evil because they have chosen to *be* evil! Then too, God specifically commanded us not to kill, steal, covet, lie, or to cold-heartedly ignore the misfortunes of others! But the truth is that, even before the 10 Commands people have always judged, even tried others on their bad works/ destructive behavior! We are a fallen creature, true. But God did not leave us without a sense of moral law to govern and restrain our base impulses. So when humans do wrong, they always know they are doing wrong, despite desperate attempts to justify their bad behavior. **Other** humans are able to observe and calculate the different effects of good and evil upon themselves and others! Globally, we humans judge ourselves based upon this criterion in courts of law. But the unsaved always have had the option to humble themselves and seek after their Creator/God and to listen to Him *and live*, with their spirits in tune with His! I do think that is all this verse is getting at. **[2 Tim. 1:7-12]**