

John Bevere: How to Arm Yourself for Tribulation

If believers are promised tribulation, affliction and persecution, why are so many of us unprepared when these hit? Bible teacher John Bevere explains how you can arm yourself in advance to win every battle.

Imagine a nation sending its military into war without bullets, guns, cannons, bombs, tanks, planes or even knives. How would that nation fare in warfare? Would they conquer? Would they contend? Would they even survive?

As ridiculous as it sounds, it's not much different from a believer who is not "armed" to suffer. Sadly, most of us are unarmed for spiritual conflict. When the unexpected strikes, we're caught off guard and enter a state of shock, bewilderment or amazement. The result is that we tend to *react* instead of *act*.

In his first letter, the apostle Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, admonishes us to "arm" ourselves to suffer in the same manner as Christ did (1 Pet. 4:1). How did Jesus suffer? Was He plagued with sin? Never, but He did have to resist it. Was He plagued with sickness or disease? No, but He probably had to fight it off. Did He lack enough money to pay bills or to accomplish His mission? No, yet I'm sure He had to trust God for provision.

Jesus was tested in all points, yet He never succumbed to one assault hurled by the enemy. We are charged to walk as He walked; therefore, we also are not to yield to any wile of the devil.

As we read more deeply in Peter's letter, we realize that the specific suffering Jesus endured was unfair treatment from people, particularly from the corrupt political and religious

leaders of His day. I personally believe this is the highest level of suffering one must endure to enter rulership.

Indeed, unfair treatment was the apostle Paul's greatest struggle. He was slandered, lied about, mocked, mistreated, insulted and falsely accused. He warns us of the same: "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

If you live as the world lives, then you'll not be bothered with persecution; you are virtually a prisoner of war. It is the soldiers under fire who are free and fighting to take enemy territory.

Yet the reality is, we live in a world that is completely contrary and even hostile to the kingdom of God. So, dear friend, if you are truly living for the Lord, *you will suffer resistance in your life in Christ*. You must be prepared. You must, as Peter put it, arm yourself.

Tribulation Will Happen

To be armed, the first thing we must know is that *tribulation is inevitable*. "In the world you will have tribulation," Jesus states emphatically in John 16:33. Not "you *might*," but "you *will*."

Paul admonishes, "We must *through many tribulations* enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22, emphasis added). And again he writes, "No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this" (1 Thess. 3:3). We are "appointed" to hardship, even as a soldier going to war. You and I are in a war.

I get upset when I hear newborn Christians being told that they're entering a trouble-free, ideal life—a utopia. I wonder if these "teachers" have pondered Jesus' words in His parable of the sower, in which He teaches that once the Word is sown in the heart of a person that "tribulation or persecution

arises for the word's sake" (Mark 4:17).

If you're a young believer and don't yet know this from personal experience, then allow me to be the first to tell you: You're in for battles like you've never faced before. However, the great news is, you don't have to lose one of the battles! Not one. You lost in many ways before you were saved; but now, through the indwelling Holy Spirit and God's matchless grace, you have authority and power over any trouble that comes your way.

The next thing we must know about becoming armed for battle is that *there's nothing new under the sun*. You will never encounter a difficulty that no one else has experienced, especially Jesus.

He was tested in every way. Any adversity you may face in your Christian walk is something that Christ Himself has already tackled and overcome.

Also, any adversity you face has already been faced, and overcome, by another believer. You can be sure of that! Paul writes: "No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it" (1 Cor. 10:13, MSG).

This verse also promises that we will not face any hardship or persecution that is beyond our ability to handle. God will not permit it. You can put away all fear that you might ever face opposition or hardship that you'd be unable to withstand or overcome.

Peter encourages us: "Be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are" (1 Pet. 5:9, NLT). The suffering he speaks of goes hand-in-glove with living as God wants us to live, but when we stand strong in

the power of His grace, we will be victorious.

You Never Have to Lose

Now we come to the third important point of being armed: *knowing you never have to lose*. Don't just glance at the following words of Jesus. Drink them in and ponder them deeply: "Listen! I have given you authority, so that you can ... overcome all the power of the Enemy, and nothing will hurt you" (Luke 10:19, GNT).

He says you've been given *authority*—not over some of the power or even most of the power, but over *all* the power of the enemy. That's 100 percent.

Not only do we have authority and power far above all the power of the enemy, but also, to back us up, we're given another amazing truth. We're told, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them [anti-Christ spirits], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4, NKJV).

All evil spirits are anti-Christ spirits, and they are the source of all tribulation. We have already overcome them because the one who whipped them is the one who lives in and empowers us.

What Jesus promises, John affirms: He says every God-begotten person conquers the world's ways. We win over anything Satan tries to throw at us because God has already made the way for our triumph.

According to John, the conquering power that brings the world to its knees is our faith (see 1 John 5:4). Why faith? Faith is what gives us access to the grace (power) we need to triumph.

This brings us to a fourth important truth about arming ourselves: *God's grace is more than enough power* to rule over

any and every adversity you may face. We can see this in Paul's personal struggle.

Because his insights and revelations were highly damaging to the kingdom of darkness, and because they strengthened the believers of his generation and the generations to follow, he consequently wrote: "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7).

Who gave Paul the "thorn in the flesh"? We know for a fact that it couldn't have been God, for we're told in James 1:16-17: "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

We're deceived if we think something other than good or perfect comes from God. A messenger of Satan is in no way good, and certainly not perfect.

Look at James's statement in verse 13: "God ... puts evil in no one's way" (MSG). God could never have sent that messenger of Satan or He would have been testing Paul with evil, thus lying through James. And God cannot lie. So without question, we may conclude that the "thorn" was not from God.

In 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, 30, Paul lists the hardships caused by the messenger of Satan that repeatedly raged against him. It was impossible for Paul to prevent or stop these unexpected difficulties in his own ability. For this reason he instead states, "I will boast about the things that show how weak I am" (v. 30, NLT, emphasis added).

See Trials as Opportunities

Paul was so frustrated by the interruptions, hardships and harassments he constantly encountered from this "thorn" in his

flesh that he cried out to God—not once, but three times (see 2 Cor. 12:8)—to remove the satanic influencer who was behind them all. After Paul’s third request, the Lord enlightened him and provided the solution, which was in him all along:

“Haven’t you figured it out yet? I’ve given you grace (unmerited empowerment), over all the power of the enemy. So My grace (empowerment) is all you need, for it demonstrates its strength in anything you can’t overcome in your human ability.

“In other words, the greater the resistance, the greater you will see the manifestation of My grace (empowerment) on your life if you simply believe” (2 Cor. 12:9, paraphrase mine).

When this became clear to Paul, a wonderful thing happened to him. He embraced a *paradigm shift*—a radical change from one way of thinking to another. He no longer pleaded for the satanic resistance to be removed. Instead, he enthusiastically wrote:

“I *delight in* weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10, NIV, emphasis added).

Hold on—*delight in*?

How could this be? Has Paul lost his mind? Is he exaggerating, lying or overstating? No, anyone who writes Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit could not do any such thing, for it is impossible for God to lie. The answer is simple: Greater resistance requires greater power to overcome, consequently producing a greater victory.

Many Christians are unhappy when facing extreme hardship. They would prefer an easy, comfortable, convenient, nonconfrontational life. They simply don’t realize that all resistance is merely the opportunity for greater power (grace) to be manifested within them and for them to grow to the next

level of maturity in Christ.

Paul wrote 2 Corinthians around A.D. 56. A few years later he wrote his letter to the Romans. Observe his entirely different attitude toward hardships in his later epistle:

“Who shall ever separate us from Christ’s love? Shall suffering and affliction and tribulation? Or calamity and distress? Or persecution or hunger or destitution or peril or sword? ... Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us” (Rom. 8:35, 37, AMP).

Drink in those words—especially: “Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him.” Before Paul experienced his great paradigm shift, he pleaded with God to steer him clear of those rough encounters with hardship.

After the shift, as the verses from Romans reveal, his message is resoundingly different. It is: *God’s grace is more than enough, not only for me to endure hardships but also to gain a surpassing victory.*

Paul was “armed to suffer.” He was armed to fight to victory and to come out better and stronger than before he entered the battle.

We too are armed when we are firmly optimistic in heart and mind regarding hardship—optimistic before, during and after the fight. We can take on a positive attitude because we no longer see tests and trials as obstacles; we see them as opportunities!

The apostle James writes, “Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity” (James 1:2, NLT).

We know that the war has already been won in Christ and we

have all the authority and power of heaven backing us up. If we don't give in, if we relentlessly stand and fight, we will always come out on top. It's God's will and destiny for our lives.

As Paul boldly affirms in Romans 8:31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (NIV).

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