

ARMED

Strong & soft (Kleenex people)

Been learning of Christ: How he has empowered us to live, to love, to give and to think.

We know Jesus didn't sin but Hebrews 5:8 states 'He learned obedience through the things He suffered' –

'He learned' means He understood, grasped, comprehended, apprehended the purpose in whatever it was He faced or endured – in what He had to go through; what He had to handle to accomplish God's purposes for Him.

1 Peter 4: *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, ² 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.*

Equip yourself with the same thoughtfulness; the same purpose; the same determination; as Christ did and the result will be that we will live for the will of God. This is life on purpose. Verse 3 says we've spent enough time fulfilling the other stuff. Same chapter later challenges us to have the right attitude towards anything we go through because God wants to reveal Himself through us. Whole chapter is great: 1 Peter 4; clear in presenting a purposeful & big picture.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18 Paul taught that everything is for our sakes if we handle it right; if we keep our focus on Christ; on the purposes of God; on things eternal... Light and momentary afflictions are achieving for us.... And bring glory to God. See how external circumstances were responded to when each believer understood the purpose.

Peter taught is to arm our self with the attitude – to equip ourselves – to gear up and to be busy with the right tools.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 – this gear, this equipment – these weapons are not natural; the word weapons there is the same word as 'arm yourself' in 1 Peter 4.

Talking about what we strengthen ourselves with. what we shoot to, if you like. How we deal with things is not fleshly; not body oriented; not temporal but spiritual – eternal. What we gear ourselves up with is powerful if we do it God's way. I need to shift a gear. The word says when we arm our self-aright those weapons (those tools of life) become powerful; they bring ability; they allow the naturally impossible to come our way; they increase our capability. the work 'mighty' is *dunamis* – it means makes things possible.

The arm of God very often represents the strength of God. Jer 17:5 knew that if we make our flesh our strength our heart will depart from God. So how do we be strong and stay soft hearted?

Critical verse in Romans 1:21 - a familiar verse to us – a hugely revolutionising verse...

When we glorify God as God and remain thankful our wise heart will stay soft and our thinking will remain fertile.

Some of the strongest passages in the new testament, Romans 1-2. If we persist in our wrong thinking and this is a bit of a mystery but it is extremely difficult for us to turn around and our persistence seems to engage God's hand in turning us over to that which we persist in. It is a most fearful place to be in – walking away from God. Thank God for those who pray; those who wait; those who intercede; for Christ Himself who ever lives to intercede for us. not that it is not to intervene for us. Nevertheless, our hearts decide. No one is immune to testing and if we are loved we are chastised. When we are chastised we must endure it as sons or else we harden our hearts.

John 12:37-40 ... staggering thought... **would not** and then **could not**.

Hebrews 3:15 ... 'today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as you did beforehand' Psalm 95:8 'do not harden not your heart as you did in the temptation'... Ps 95 mentions 'Meribah' – a place of quarrelling (quite a proving ground) 'Massah' – a place of testing.

What does it hard hearted mean? What does it look like? All have thoughts about what hard hearted might mean? Lacking compassion; cold; unteachable; unrelenting; unyielding...

Our hearts is where Christ chooses to dwell... the heart is the seat of our intelligence; our choices; our emotions; our spiritual life – really the whole part of our person that either responds or rejects. There is where God is at work. It must be soft – open – warm – beating with purpose – a soft heart accepts, embraces what God is offering... yields to what He is asking... applies the truth in love... understands, yields... wants to understand; wants to comprehend...

Romans 12:1-2... A soft heart will follow God and keep His Word. This is life on purpose. Not talking about looking for the silver lining or trying to see the positive side but a determination to follow; to be part of the greatest cause ever – the Kingdom of God. 'Don't be conformed (moulded, squeezed) any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will know what the good, pleasing and perfect will of God is.'

As things get darker we must be strong, get strong and stay soft. Ezekiel 36 – mentions a heart of flesh; a new heart that can operate with a new spirit – a new attitude to choose the right perceptions.

Hard heartedness doesn't start off intentional but must be addressed. Easy to think of Pharaoh, Jonah ... see how easy it is for this to start: Mark 6 ... story of five loaves and fishes... feeds 5 thousand with twelve baskets left over of bread and fish... at the end of the day Jesus puts the disciples in a boat to go ahead of Him to Bethsaida and He goes to pray. He sees them straining at the oar and comes to them... they are terrified...

⁴⁹ And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

⁵¹ Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. **And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marvelled.** ⁵² For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

2 chapters later: Mark 8. Feed 4000... hopped in the boat to leave together and the disciples only brought one loaf with them...

¹³ And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. ¹⁴ Now the disciples^[a] had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ Then He charged them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." ¹⁶ And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have no bread." ¹⁷ But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "Why do you reason because you have no bread? **Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened?** ¹⁸ Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? **And do you not remember?** ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to Him, "Twelve." ²⁰ "Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?" And they said, "Seven." ²¹ So He said to them, "**How is it you do not understand?**"

Understand? It means exercise your mind; it means put it together not just get it. It means to comprehend – to apprehend and make sense of it; to grasp it. Matthew 11:12 ... kingdom of God advances forcefully and forceful men lay hold of it... the energetic seize it... there's more than a day to seize; there's a kingdom to receive; kingdom purposes to pursue; kingdom way to walk in... God would not have us to be lazy.

We must bring our thinking in... this is 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ... to take every thought captive means to have a mind that brings purpose into obedience to Christ; brings perceptions in the context of Christ; brings intellect into the intelligence of Christ; brings disposition into the attitude of Christ – literally means get our heart right – our self right – our whole responding self right.

This is soft heartedness. And we are supernaturally empowered to do this. We are armed – and we arm ourselves the same way Christ did. 1 Peter 4 ... says arm yourselves with the same mind as Christ...

Paul showed us how... Read those first 12 verses of Philippians 2 – there is no flesh here. Jesus did not let the fact that He equal with God get in the way of what He needed to understand to accomplish God's purposes; He didn't care for reputation – in fact made Himself of none; He didn't care which job He did – He made Himself – changed His personality to that of a servant and became obedient even to death... Philippians states He had no selfish ambition – He didn't use His personality to manipulate outcomes; He knew just how useless conceit really is; He put other people's needs ahead of His own and He looked to the interests of others... See NIV: 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross.

And later in the chapter: V13 – ‘for (purpose!) it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil His good purpose’ To accept this is softheartedness.

Asaph’s approach: See Asaph’s change of approach: compare v1-9 (asking all the wrong questions) then chooses to shoot for kingdom: v10 forward.

Psalm 77: ¹ I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. ² When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted. ³ I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint. ⁴ You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. ⁵ I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; ⁶ I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked: ⁷ “Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favour again? ⁸ Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”

¹⁰Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the LORD; YES, I will remember your miracles of long ago. ¹² I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.” ¹³ Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? ¹⁴ You are the God who performs miracles; You display your power among the peoples. ¹⁵ With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. ¹⁶ The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. ¹⁷ The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; Your arrows flashed back and forth. ¹⁸ Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, Your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. ¹⁹ Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. ²⁰ You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Verse10: change of approach: ‘to this I’ll shoot’ and he hits the target.

Psalm 78 - worth reading the whole psalm: too long to copy and paste here: essential verses for the purposes of this message:

- ⁹ The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle; ¹⁰ they did not keep God’s covenant and refused to live by his law. ¹¹ They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them ¹² In spite of all this, they kept on sinning; in spite of his wonders, they did not believe. ...
- ³⁷ their hearts were not loyal to him,
- ⁴¹ Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. ⁴² They did not remember his power
- ⁵⁷ Like their ancestors they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow.

They limited the limitless God because they did not remember who He was and neither were they grateful; they ended their years in futility

Taking our thoughts captive; bringing our self into line with Jesus is more than a behaviour modification program. V57 likens hardheartedness to a faulty bow; a deceitful bow; it is a bow, a weapon that looks ready but it’s slack; there’s no power in it; it’s not dependable and it can’t hit the mark. Hardheartedness is likened to a fully equipped soldier who turns his back in the day of battle... we must be strong and to be strong our heart must be loyal, be faithful, soft.

SEE HIS HANDIWORK: RECALL HIS MIRACLES: RECALL HIS WORKINGS: REMIND HIM OF HIS PROMISES

We are dependent on the mighty working of God within us. We cannot limit Him by failing to recall who He is and what He has done and what He can do; what He will do. Our God is a blessing God; we must position our hearts. We are armed and He is as able as what we have strengthened ourselves with. What is Father saying?

If you don’t get it, don’t walk away; press in – shoot to God.