

*The Key To Spiritual Victory*

Early on in the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan we read repeated reports of our troops having to go into combat without having the proper equipment.

Three years ago, General Sanchez, the then top U.S. commander in Iraq, complained to the Pentagon that his supply situation was so poor that it threatened Army troops' ability to fight.

On another battle front, I think one of the great missions quotes of all times was given by Pastor Steve's father. After a lifetime career of serving in Peru, Don Bond said, "To send a missionary to the field and not stand behind him in prayer is like sending a soldier into battle without any ammunition."

You might endure out there for a while but there would be no way of actively pursuing your enemy; no way of fighting back to win the battle.

Now the same is so obviously true for the life of a follower of Jesus Christ. We need to be able to withstand Satan's attacks. We need the defense of God's armor to protect us, but we need a way to launch a counter attack also.

We need to have the proper equipment.

When James, the brother of Jesus, writes, *Resist the devil and he will flee from you*. I see more than just a passive resistance. There is a way to actively resist and to drive the devil away.

That offensive weapon of active resistance is given to us in Ephesians chapter 6.

**Turn to Ephesians 6 pg 1042**

We're in a series studying the book of Ephesians but we're taking the time to look in detail at the unique protection God has provided for us as we deal with our very real enemy, Satan.

You might call what we've been doing for the past several weeks a "Series within a series." What we've seen is that Satan is not a figment of someone's imagination but a

very real being. He doesn't wear a red Halloween costume with horns and a tail. He's a beautiful, but deceptive being who's sole objective is to destroy everything that's God's.

That means he'll do anything it takes to steer people away from worshipping and honoring God.

He'll use enticement to sin, he'll use false religion, he'll appeal our pride and self-focus. What ever it takes he'll do it, because to him it's an all out war.

The letter to the Ephesians was written in the first century AD so it uses illustrations that people of that time could relate to.

In this case the illustration is the armor and weaponry of a Roman soldier.

### **Read vs. 13-17**

What God is doing for us here is drawing a careful analogy between the battle outfitting of a first century Roman warrior and our battle outfitting.

And just as the Romans withstood their enemies, we have an enemy who is constantly trying to bring confusion and defeat into our lives.

Today as we come to the sword of the Spirit we've come to an obviously different piece of equipment. The sword is the only offensive piece mentioned in this analogy.

#### *I. Roman Soldiers Carried A Short, Two Edged Sword Into Battle*

There were two basic types of swords used in the New Testament times. Last week we mentioned the broad sword, the *rhomphaia*.

This was a large heavy sword that would be gripped with two hands and used to crush the skull of the enemy.

The broad sword, along with spears, bows and arrows, and battle-axes were all 1st century weapons that were in use at the time in which Ephesians was written.

But God doesn't choose to use any of these other weapons in this analogy.

Instead He chose the *machaira*. The *machaira* was that sharp two-edged sword. It was anywhere from 1 to 1 1/2 feet long and it most accurately represents the offensive weapon that God has provided for us.

Our weapon against Satan is for hand -to-hand combat, it's not for long distances like a

bow and arrow. It isn't cumbersome like a spear. It's not like a broad sword or a battle-ax that we would swing back and forth without accuracy hoping to crush our opponent.

Instead, the weapon that God has provided for us to use in resisting Satan is one that is deadly but only when it's used properly. It's one that is sharp and precise, but its only good if we are skillful and accurate as we use it.

If we are proficient at its use, it's the most effective weapon possible.

Our weapon against Satan is the *machaira* of the Spirit, the Word of God.

God has given us the victory. Satan will flee from us. Not just because he can't penetrate our armor of righteousness and truth and salvation, but because we can drive him back.

One of our main problems is that Satan keeps us intimidated. We don't even realize it. He terrorizes us, frightens us, and keeps us down with a feeling of hopelessness. And if he succeeds in terrorizing us we are already defeated. Frightened troops don't go into battle, they run the other way.

But the sword is the final antidote to Satan's intimidation. We realize that he may be strong, cunning, powerful and crafty but with sword in hand it is possible to resist the devil and cause him to flee.

Now just a word of caution at this point. Our culture regards the devil as a joke. And sometimes it seems like some Christians do too.

As much as the writers of the Bible had confidence in the power of God, and as sure as they all were that the victory had been won, they still treated Satan with the utmost respect.

Not respect for him as a person, but respect for his power and ability. The New Testament never speaks jokingly about the devil.

In fact, just the opposite is true. Probably the most unique example of this is found in the little book of Jude. I'd like you to look there with me and see this situation that Jude describes that involves Michael and Satan.

**Turn to Jude pg. 1086**

**Read 8** - Here Jude is describing apostates, people who have rejected the truth of God.

They have no respect for authority.

## Yet - Read 9

Michael the archangel confronted Satan the archenemy. This confrontation took place over the body of the man Moses and apparently Satan wanted Moses remains.

We don't know the details of this event because its not talked about elsewhere in the Bible but here Jude makes his point.

Even Michael the archangel (that means he's right up there at the top of the angelic hierarchy) in the midst of this dispute didn't bring a reviling accusation against Satan. He didn't bring (literally) a "blasphemous judgment." Instead he said, "The Lord rebuke you."

So even Michael himself respected the power of Satan. He didn't take it lightly or even begin to think that he could handle the evil one by himself.

Never forget the awesome strength and power of the one who is set against us. But at the same time we're not to be intimidated by him. We need stand and withstand, and use the sword of the Spirit as our weapon.

Now if so much depends upon this one piece of equipment we want to be sure that we know exactly what it is.

In one sense this sword is easy to define. It happens to be the only piece of armor that's explained. The others we've had to develop an explanation on our own by dealing with other Biblical cross references. This time we're told. The sword of the spirit is the word of God.

*I. Roman Soldiers Carried A Short, Two Edged Sword Into Battle*

*II. Our One And Only Weapon Against Satan Is The Bible*

Now what makes the Bible so effective? Why is it that the Bible is so adequate for the job? Why can't we fight Satan with our own cleverness and our own abilities? Why does the Bible alone fit the bill?

There are 3 factors and they are all based upon the fact that this is the sword of the Spirit.

#1 The Holy Spirit produces the Word of God

This is a spiritual battle. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. We need a spiritual

weapon to fight our spiritual adversary. The scriptures are Holy Spirit inspired.

Go with me to II Peter chapter one, **page 1080** and we'll see one of the clearest statements of the source of Bible.

In verses 15 through 18 Peter describes his experience on the Mt. of Transfiguration. He saw Christ transfigured, in other words he was given a preview of how Jesus would appear in glory. He heard the voice of God from heaven. Now that's pretty convincing stuff.

But then Peter goes on to say in **verses 19 - 20...**

Peter says we have something more sure than what our senses of sight and sound could tell us. We have the Bible. And the reason that the Bible is so dependable and sure is because the Bible is not of any private interpretation.

Now that word "interpretation" has caused a lot of confusion in people's minds.

Some people have taken this to mean that Peter was saying you always need to use the Bible to interpret the Bible. No scripture is of a by itself Interpretation.

It's definitely true that all scripture must dovetail together and that we need to compare scripture with scripture, but that wasn't Peter's point here.

Many cult groups use this verse to convince their followers that individuals can't interpret the Bible for themselves. They have to get the real meaning through the group.

Quite the contrary the interpretation of the Bible is for us as individuals.

Every believer in Jesus Christ has the right and the responsibility to *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* II Timothy 2:15

Peter's point here is that no prophecy of the scripture came about by the prophets own interpretation. In other words they didn't come up with it themselves. They didn't assess the facts and then make a prophecy based upon their own personal opinion.

A. T. Robertson in his word studies in the New Testament translates this "no prophecy of the scriptures springs out of private disclosure."

The reason that we can trust the Bible and in this case specifically the Old Testament prophets, is because the prophets didn't dream this stuff up!

And verse 21 nails it down for us. It starts off "for." This is how we know it just wasn't their personal opinion

### **Read 21**

The reason that the prophets could say "this is what the sovereign Lord says" when they spoke is because God was actually speaking through them and it was God the Holy Spirit who spoke through them to produce that Word.

When we face Satan and all his temptations and accusations and deceptions we need more than the words of Godly individuals. We need more than the thoughts of spiritual individuals. Our sword is the Word of God. It has to be the sword that God has provided, because nothing else will be effective against Satan.

The word of God is the sword of the spirit because the Holy Spirit provides it.

He gave chosen men the revelation and even though he didn't destroy their individuality so that they acted like typewriters, he still used them to record that revelation.

So the Bible is not merely a human book. It is God's own outbreathed word and the Holy Spirit worked through men to produce it.

It is so vital and so important for us to see that the sword is part of the whole armor of God. We are not to fight the devil with our own ideas. We're to fight him with this word that the very Spirit of God has provided.

Remember something here. Satan is subject to the authority of the Word of God.

You read through the book of Job in the Old Testament and you find that every time Satan wanted to make a move he had to get God's permission.

When Jesus cast out the demons from a possessed man in Gadara the demons begged him that he would allow them to enter a herd of pigs.

Luke 8:32 says Jesus allowed them. He gave his permission.

In the book of Acts demons were cast out in the name of Jesus and by His power alone.

God's word contains all the authority of God and Satan is subject to God.

But then there's another sense in which the Bible is the "Sword of the Spirit." The third person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, not only provided the Word but #2. He also illuminates it.

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. I Corinthians 1:18 NIV*

There are liberal Bible scholars who know volumes of facts about the Bible. They know the original languages, they know history, they know many, many details. But they don't know God.

They've never trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. And in spite of all the knowledge they've accumulated in their brains, there's no reality of God in their lives. When Satan attacks, they have a dollar store plastic sword - not a sharp skillful weapon. Now why? What makes the difference?

If they have the same God inspired book we do why don't they have the sword of the Spirit?

Look with me at **I Corinthians chapter 2, pg. 1013**

**Read vs. 9-14**

The moment you receive Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit comes to take up residence in your body. Your body becomes the home or the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And so God living within you illuminates the Scriptures for you. He sheds the light on them that makes the Bible more than a collection of stories and ideas about God.

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (machaira), piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12*

Only the Holy Spirit who inspired those words in the first place can make them real and living in our lives. The Bible is alive, but its only when we're spiritually alive that its living power is understood.

And then there is a 3rd sense in which the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. And

that is that the Holy Spirit applies the Word.

It's the Holy Spirit alone that enables us to use the Bible properly.

Back in Ephesians 6, God's main concern is that we be equipped to fight the enemy. We're to repel him, we are to cause him to flee, we are to resist him.

It's very important that we know the contents of the Bible. But it's equally important that we use it in the right way. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to do that.

All down through church history there has been trouble because people have tried to separate the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

There have been many fanatics and cult groups who had their beginnings with a supposed message from God that God some how gave apart from the Bible.

Sometimes I cringe when I hear people flippantly saying God told me to do this and told me to do that. Too many times God seems to "tell" people what they want to hear and so often God becomes their excuse for their actions.

The sword of the Spirit isn't words from God in the middle of the night. It is the Bible.

Of course, there's always been the other extreme of discounting the Holy Spirit altogether. Our life with God isn't a matter of just following the right formulas.

A great church isn't just one that's super organized and has all the great programs. This is where our walk with the God becomes so important. If we're grieving the spirit through sin, if we are resisting the Spirit's teaching and leading ministry in our life, if we are not filled with the Spirit, then the Holy Spirit's ministry isn't going to happen.

My yieldedness to the Holy Spirit is going to effect my accuracy with which I wield my sword. That ability to be able to apply the right scriptures to the right situation hinges on my walk with Jesus Christ.

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*II. Our One And Only Weapon Against Satan Is The Bible*

*III. Our Offensive Weapon Is The Specifics Of Scripture*

There are 6 words in the Greek New Testament which are translated by the word "word." Of those 6, 2 are used in the phrase "the Word of God."

One term that's used to describe the Word of God is the Word *logos*. We derive our English words "logic" and "logical" from *logos*. It's a very technical term in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is called the *logos* in John 1.

When the term *logos* is applied to the written scriptures it means the revelation of God as a whole. It's a broad term, a general word encompassing all of the Bible. It's not the term that used in Ephesians 6:17.

Instead the Holy Spirit inspired the term *rhema*, which means individual commands. It means a statement of instruction as opposed to the scriptures in general.

When we were interpreting the first piece of armor we saw that we were to have on the belt of truth.

Jesus said, "I am the truth." He prayed to his heavenly Father and said, "Your Word is truth." And so we saw that the thing that's to cinch us up and prepare us from the battle is a firm confidence in the living word, Jesus, which we can only have through the written Word, the Bible.

The overall truth of the Bible is our belt. But now see the difference between the belt of truth and sword of the Spirit. A soldier wore a belt and fixed to that belt was his sword.

We are to have firm confidence in the overall truth of the Bible but when it comes to the battle we need to be able to use the appropriate portions of Bible. The *rhema*, the specifics.

How many times have you heard people say. "The Bible says" and then they misquote a verse or quote part a verse and come up with something totally off the wall.

Satan loves that. That brings disruption and division into the church. It brings confusion into people's lives. It causes people to say, "Oh, you can prove anything you want from the Bible."

Maybe you've had this experience. Your trying to share the good news of Jesus Christ with someone so that they might understand that they need to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior.

And as you share Satan tries to snatch away the seeds that your planting in their mind. He's trying to keep the blinders over their eyes lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine in unto them.

And the person asks you questions that you just can't seem to answer. So you say, "Well

I know it's in the Bible somewhere. I just can't put my finger on it right now.”

And you can't get your hands on your sword. You can't use your sword with accuracy because you don't know the specifics of the Bible and the person wonders if what you are saying is really the truth.

Sometimes it happens in the middle of temptation in our lives. Satan comes tempting us with a wrong attitude or action and we just can't recall the specific biblical principle to meet the temptation. We fall and we're weak because we have don't have a sword to repel him.

I want us to look at one final passage this morning. We've alluded to it several times in the past few weeks but now I'd like you to see in detail just how Jesus stood against the devil.

### **Matthew 4, Pg 851**

**Read Verse 1** This is immediately after Jesus Baptism and the inauguration of his public ministry.

**Read Verse 2** Jesus was weak physically at this point but He was spiritually strong. He'd been communing with His heavenly Father at this critical time at the beginning of His ministry.

**Read Verse 3** Adam in the garden acted independently of God. Jesus the last Adam was put to the same test. And each of these 3 appeals of Satan were designed to get Jesus to act on His own.

Now notice very carefully how Jesus met this temptation.

**Read Verse 4** First Jesus says, “it is written” in other words the authority for what I'm about to say is not the teachings of Judaism, it's not my personal opinion, it's God's Truth.

And then He uses the appropriate Scripture. He quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3. He used His sword accurately and what happens? Watch carefully.

**Read Verse 5 & 6** This time Satan tires to beat Jesus at his own game so he quotes some Scripture too. Jesus had just demonstrated His trust in God and his confidence in the Word of God.

So Satan says "OK, if you really trust God prove it. Jump off this east wall of Solomon's porch, drop 600 feet to the ground below." And just to wrestle the sword of the spirit from Jesus hand Satan quotes Psalm 91 which promises God's protection.

This more than anything else should tell us how important it is for us to know and use the specifics of Scripture. The devil knows the Bible and he'll use it against you just like he tried to use it against Jesus. He is an expert in mishandling Scripture.

"Jump off the wall, God will save you and you will demonstrate your trust in the Bible and your trust in Him."

**Look at Jesus answer in verse 7.** Jesus never bats an eye. He doesn't dispute the Scriptures, he doesn't argue about it's meaning. He merely quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. You don't tempt God.

God gives us great promises in the Bible but we're not to turn those around to presumptuously try force God into doing what we want Him to do. Again, Jesus accurately and skillfully wields the sword of the Spirit.

And then one last temptation. **Read verse 8 -11**

Every temptation was met the same way. He used the specific portion of scripture that was appropriate to the temptation at hand.

The sword is provided for us. We have the Bible but we have to know that Bible. And that comes from the working of the Holy Spirit as He illuminates our understanding of the Bible and applies it by bringing appropriate Scriptures to our memory at the crucial times.

But you know there's something that we have to do in conjunction with the Spirit's work. He's not going to pry open our skulls and funnel all this scripture into us.

It's only going to come if we study to show ourselves approved unto God. David said, *"Your Word have I hid in my heart."* Peter expressed it this way. *"As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby."* I Peter 2:2

Ever see a newborn drink his milk? He goes at it like there's no tomorrow. Every feeding he acts like he hasn't eaten for 40 days and 40 nights.

That's the way we are to be with the Bible. We are to soak ourselves with Scriptures. Our minds are to be saturated and inundated with the Word of God.

You ought to be reading the Bible, understanding it's meaning, and then putting it into your memory banks so that at a moment's notice you can draw out your sword.

You know before Jesus was 30 and started his public ministry he never used his divine attributes. He grew in wisdom and stature just like you and I. As a young man he was not omniscient. Everything He knew about the Bible He learned from personal study. He wasn't out there quoting verses to Joseph and Mary in the manger. He grew up just like anybody else.

When his parents found him in the temple at 12 years old astounding all the religious teachers with His wisdom, that was wisdom which He acquired through his own study and dependence upon the Holy Spirit as His teacher.

And even during his 3 years of ministry Jesus never independently used his divine attributes either. He only used them at the specific direction of his heavenly Father.

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness I don't believe He was speaking out of his omniscience. I believe He answered Satan by drawing on all those years of preparation; all those years of personal study of the Word and in dependence upon the Spirit.

Now catch this because it's huge. If Jesus Christ needed the Word of God for preparation and protection, how much more do you and I?

We are living in exciting days. But they are days in which Satan, who knows his time is short, is pulling out all the stops. He's making one final assault to corrupt God's church, to undermine us, and to cause us to fall.

Take up the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.