

Finishing Well

Lesson #22

Sword of The Spirit

June 29, 2022

If you are a born-again, spirit-filled, heaven-bound Christian, you are at war. Although our ultimate victory has been won by Christ on the cross, we are engaged in spiritual battles for our heart, mind and soul every day. Satan is undermining our efforts, working at weakening our faith, destroying our families and pushing hard to steal our children's minds. Not to mention the heavy spiritual battles that our country and the world are facing, as we watch moral relativism and attacks against Jews and Christians increase by the minute.

Eph. 6:10-17 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

➤ Schemes or wiles = refers to a predatory animal stalking its prey.

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

¹³ Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God:

Greg Laurie: Many believers have all their spiritual armor in place, but they never use their sword. They talk about it. They study it. They compare swords with others. But they never use their sword in spiritual battle. The devil would be pleased if believers would just keep their sword in its sheath. The devil knows too well the power and the authority of the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word.

Therefore, if our Bibles lay on our desks at the end of the day, unopened, we become as vulnerable as an unarmed soldier. We become easy prey for the enemy.

Why is the Word compared to a Sword?

A. A sword in the ancient world was a weapon for battle and a symbol of authority.

Defeated generals would give their swords to the victors as a symbol of relinquishing their authority to another.

The samurai warriors of medieval Japan believed their swords had spiritual reality and power. These swords were always with them, from birth to death, whether in the bedroom or on the battlefield. Those who made the swords approached their craft as a spiritual endeavor, fasting, praying, and even wearing priestly white robes. They mixed and hammered layers of hard and soft steel to forge swords that excelled in both sharpness and strength.

To the warriors, these swords represented their honor.

Key Point: The Bible is clearly our authority. We must never relinquish it in battle.

Prov. 30:5a Every word of God is pure...

B. The sword was a symbol of Power. The Word of God is the source of power.

Sword = #3162 = machaira from mache = a knife, sword

- refers to a relatively short sword for cutting and stabbing; soldiers' deadliest weapon
- Machaira is used ~156 times in the Septuagint and 29 times in the NT.

When the enemy saw it from a distance, they shuddered at its sight. It was razor sharp on both sides of the blade and its very end turned upward, causing the point of the blade to be extremely sharp and deadly. After stabbing his enemy, the soldier would grab the sword tightly and twist it, pulling the man's entrails out as the sword was removed.

Heb. 4:12 For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword [machaira], piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

1. It has the Power To Wound The Heart. When one previously disinterested in spiritual things hears the Word and is cut to the heart by it.

This happened on the day of Pentecost when the people heard Peter preaching and "were cut to the heart" and cried out, 'What shall we do?'" [Acts 2:37]

2. It has the Power To Penetrate The Heart. The Bible speaks of the unconverted as having a heart of stone and hardened, but it speaks of the Word as able to cut through any hardness.

In Acts 16:14, as Paul preached the Word to Lydia and the others, God used the Word to "open her heart" and she was converted.

Spurgeon once tested an auditorium in which he was to speak that evening. Stepping into the pulpit, he loudly proclaimed, Behold the lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Satisfied with the acoustics, he left and went his way. Unknown to him, there were two men working in the rafters of that large auditorium, neither one a Christian. One of the men was pricked in his heart by the verse Spurgeon quoted and became a believer later that day!

- Such is the penetrating power of God's eternal word!

3. It has the Power To Heal The Heart. It cuts and heals. It convicts and comforts.

Isa. 55:11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

God's Word is a sword. It is powerful—wounding, penetrating, and healing the human heart.

4. It has the Power For Sanctification John 17:14-19

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth.

James 1:21b Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls.

Why does the Apostle Paul call it: The Sword of the Spirit?

- A. It is a weapon of Divine Origin

II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:20-21 remind us that the Bible is God's Word not man's.

- The Spirit forged this sword.

II Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped.

Paul reminds us in II Cor. 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; They are of divine origin; it is God's Word.

B. It is a weapon of Divine Choice.

The Bible is "regulation issue" for every believer. We are not left to our choice to determine what weapons we are to use. God has determined the Bible is the only basis for our authority.

C. It is a weapon of Divine Power.

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

I Pet. 2:23-25 Peter reminds us: we have been born again through the Word of God.

Rom. 10:17 Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

I Thess. 2:13; Rom.12:1-2 The Word has power to change and transform the lives of believers

Key Point: Everything in Scripture confirms the Word of God has power of divine origin.

Why is this weapon so important?

1. Without it, you are not fully equipped.

II Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished [equipped] unto all good works.

2. Without it, you cannot withstand for long.

The major emphasis of Ephesians 6 and spiritual warfare is that the believer must stand and withstand the attacks of the enemy. The majority of the weapons listed are defensive.

➤ The victory is ours as we stand firm in spiritual warfare.

The boxer who only blocks punches will not stand for long!

➤ The Word has been given to us to use against the enemy.

➤ Our offensive thrusts with the Word cause the attacker to flee.

I John 2:14c The Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

3. Without it, you cannot win the battle.

With the other weapons, you may be able to stave off defeat, but without the sword you cannot have victory.

The Word of God is a living Word in the person of Jesus Christ.

There is an intimate connection between the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Throughout church history people have tried to divide the two.

➤ You have cold, intellectual people who stress doctrine and don't rely on the Spirit.

➤ You have warm and sometimes heated-into-a-frenzy people that stress the Spirit, but they neglect knowing the Word.

H.B. Charles: You never get so much spirit that you don't need the word of God.

You never get so much of the Word of God that you don't need the Spirit.

In Gen. 1, the Word of God and the Spirit of God worked together in creation.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Charles: It is through the working of God and the Spirit of God that God stepped out into nowhere, called something out of nothing, put something on nothing and told it to stay there.

Key Point: We need the Word and the Spirit together with our minds fully engaged, hearts all in and relying on the truths as revealed in Scripture by depending on the Holy Spirit.

There are 2 words in the Greek for The Word of God.

Logos refers to the total utterance of God, the complete revelation of what God has said.

- Written Word of God. His collective written, divine, expressed revelation to man given to holy men and written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. [II Tim.3:16]

Word = #4487 = rhema from verb rheo = to speak - to say, speak or utter definite words

- Refers to the spoken word, refers to uttering a definite intelligible word.
- Rhema means a specific passage or verse that has special application to a specific experience in our lives.

Consider: Paul is not talking about general knowledge of Scripture.

Key Point: Paul is emphasizing the precision that comes by knowledge and understanding of specific truths.

The interplay between God's Spirit and Word of God is of critical importance.

Both are necessary to wield the sword well.

- Wield = to use a tool or weapon in an effective way

The sword of Scanderbeg, a famous Albanian warrior against the Turks, used to be shown at Vienna. A man who once looked at and handled it said, "Is this the sword which won so many victories? I see nothing in it—it is but a common sword."

The answer was, "You should have seen the arm that wielded it!"

Philpot: So it is not merely taking a text—adopting scripture language—and quoting passages—which will beat back the fiery assaults of Satan.

- But it is having the Word of truth brought into our heart by the power of God—faith raised up to believe that God Himself speaks it to our heart—being thus enabled to wield it in the strength of the Spirit—and by the power of faith in living exercise, to resist every hellish thrust!

It is the most deadly and powerful spiritual weapon used in our struggle against the forces of darkness, capable of deflecting any blow the enemy might direct at us, when used effectively.

Jesus' Wielding The Sword of the Spirit, The Word of God

The Sword of the Spirit is intended for combat—a weapon for frontline spiritual warfare.

- Matt. 4:1-11 Mark 1:12-13 Luke 4:1-13
- Important: His Baptism The Context
- Sequence: His Baptism > The Temptation

In Matt. 3:16-17, there is a record of the anointing of Jesus Christ at His baptism. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

H.B. Charles: God wanted to make it clear:

The one getting baptized in the water is not just another sinner in the line.

- God the Father was audible. God the Holy Spirit was visible.
- Jesus left the water empowered by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- After being anointed by the Holy Spirit, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

I Cor. 10:2 Israel's Exodus is called a baptism.

- The 3 passages Jesus quotes come from 3 sins of Israel.
 - ❖ Complaints about lack of food
 - ❖ Putting God to the test by expecting Him to produce water from a rock
 - ❖ Worshiping a golden calf
 - ❖ They were overthrown in the wilderness.
- These 3 sins are the exact same temptations Jesus overcomes in the wilderness after being there 40 days. He illustrates wielding the Word effectively.

Interesting Note: Mark's account is very short, but he adds a couple of details.

Mark 1:12 And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness.

- Strong word that Mark used 11x to describe the casting out of demons.

Mark 1:13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.

- The first Adam was tested in a beautiful, perfect environment and failed.
- Jesus, the second Adam, was tested in a dangerous wilderness and won the victory.

Luke 4:1-2 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² Being forty days tempted of the devil.

And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered.

Satan's scheme: Get you to lay down your sword. Attack your confidence in God's Word.

Gen. 3: Hath God really said? Question the reliability so you will lay down your sword

Charles: Jesus did not fight back by saying, Leave me alone! I'm filled with the Holy Spirit.

He wielded the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Jesus was God. He didn't have to stand around and deal with the devil. But instead, He stood and modeled for us the right way to fight temptation: with the Word of God.

- Three times Jesus used the machaira, the sword, against the enemy.

Jesus used specific scriptural truths [rhema] to counter specific satanic falsehoods.

Each thrust of Satan was blocked with an appropriate quotation of a verse.

Key Point: The Lord's experience of temptation prepared Him to be our sympathetic High Priest.

Heb. 4:14-16 Jesus was tempted in all things like we are.

Three avenues in which Satan tempts us: [I John 2:16]

- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

Satan attacks the 3 Christian virtues: Faith, Hope, Love

Jesus faced the enemy as man, not as the Son of God. His first word was, "Man."

- Don't think Jesus used His divine powers to overcome the enemy.
- That is precisely what the enemy wanted Him to do.
- Jesus revealed the enemy's tactics and how we can overcome our temptations.
- Jesus used the spiritual resources that are available to us:
 - ❖ The Power of the Holy Spirit The Power of the Word of God
- PLUS, we have in heaven the interceding Savior who has defeated the enemy.

Temptation #1: Involves the Love of God

Focus is on physical needs and desires; lust of the flesh

- Since you are God's Beloved Son, why doesn't your Father feed you?
- Why has your Father put you in this terrible wilderness?

Matt. 4:3-4 And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Quotes Deut. 8:3 > Event in Exodus 16 > Complaint about lack of food

And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know;

that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Note: Satan suggested Jesus use His divine powers to meet His physical needs.

- When we allow our circumstances to dictate our actions instead of following God's will for us, we sin.

Key Point: We need the Word of God to nourish our soul.

What digestion is to the physical body, meditation is to the soul.

Joshua 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Key Point: The wielding of the sword of the Spirit requires great skill which is dependent upon thorough knowledge of the Word of God. The efficient soldier keeps fit like the godly man in Psalm 1:2-3 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Temptation #2: Questions the Father's faithfulness to see if God would keep His promise.

Matt. 4:5-7 Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple,⁶ And saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down:

for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

- If you really believe the Scriptures, why don't you jump? Does the Father care for you?
- Satan quoted Ps. 91:11-12 Scripture out of context.

God seems to promise protection in angelic form, without a qualification in sight. If we stick to Satan's words, his case is persuasive. But Psalm 91 does not offer a safety net to rescue everyone from the consequences of reckless behavior. Rather, God promises his protection to those who make him their dwelling place. To those who call to Him and hold fast to Him in love.

- Satan left out: God watches over those who are "IN HIS WAYS."

Consider: We tempt God when we put ourselves into circumstances that force Him to work miracles on our behalf.

- The diabetic who refuses to take insulin and argues, "Jesus will take care of me."

Consider: Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Context: Paul, suffering in prison, with a thorn (a weakness) that God won't remove, Phil. 4:11-12 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Key Point: To properly wield this weapon, we must learn all we can about it, including the context.

Matt. 4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

- Quotes Deut. 6:16 > Event in Exodus 17 > Tempted God at Massah

Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah.

Ex. 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying,

Is the LORD among us, or not?

Temptation #3: Questions His HOPE: He offers the world's kingdoms this side of the cross.

Matt. 4:8-9 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

- In the Greek > If you will worship me JUST ONCE.

Note: Satan said nothing about service, but Jesus knew that whatever we worship, we will serve. Worship and service must go together.

- Quotes Deut. 6:13 > Event in Exodus 32 > Worshiped Golden Calf

Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name.

Matt. 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Key Point: Temptation involves the WILL. Jesus came to do the WILL of the Father. [John 4:34]

Key Point: Jesus knew He would suffer and die before He entered His glory.

Luke 24:26; I Pet. 1:11; 5:1

Satan tempted Jesus to enjoy all the glory without enduring the suffering.

Key Point: There are NO shortcuts in the Christian life. There is no easy way to spiritual victory and maturity. If God's perfect Son had to hang on a tree before He could sit on the throne, then His disciples should not expect an easier way of life. [Luke 9:22-26; Acts 24:22]

If we want to share in His glory, we must also share in the suffering. [I Pet. 5:10]

Rom. 8:17-18 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

J. C. Ryle: No Christian is in a healthy state of mind who is not prepared for trouble and persecution. He that expects to cross the troubled waters of this world, and to reach heaven with wind and tide always in his favor, knows nothing yet as he ought to know. We never can tell what is before us in life. But of one thing we may be very sure - - we must carry the cross if we would wear the crown. Let us grasp this principle firmly and NEVER forget it.

Key Point: As the prince of this world, Satan could offer these kingdoms. [John 12:31; 14:30].

Jesus did not need Satan's offer. God the Father had already promised Jesus the kingdom.

Ps. 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance.

- The same promise is in Ps. 22:22-31 in the psalm of the cross.

Luke 4:13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.

Interesting: Through Peter, Satan again tempted Jesus to abandon the cross. [Matt. 16:21-23]

Through the crowd that had been fed, Satan tempted Jesus to an easy kingdom. [John 6:15]

- One victory never guarantees freedom from further temptation.
- Each victory we experience only makes Satan try harder.

Key Point: H.B. Charles: The Holy Spirit enables the believer to stand his ground, but He will only fight with His own Sword.

Ps. 119:133 Order [establish] my steps in Your word and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

If Jesus can get the victory over the Devil with 3 verses from Deut., can't we get the victory with 66 books of the inspired Word of God?

II Tim. 2:15 Study [eager, zealous] to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [dissecting; handling accurately] the word of truth.

Satan fears out study of God's Word. Ignorance of it is Satan's best weapon against us.

Paul Washer: Your laziness with regard to Scripture is an direct affront to the majesty of God and it demonstrates your unbelief. You're like a child who gets the most exquisite gift, after opening the box you look at it and throw it away and play with the box.