

Finishing Well

Lesson #23

Wielding The Sword of The Spirit

July 6, 2022

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.

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.

Spiritual warfare is real. The Devil continually schemes to put stumbling blocks in our path. If we trust in ourselves to fight these battles we will surely fall [11-12].

During the Korean War, a unit known as Baker Company was separated from the regiment, and enemy forces were advancing on them. For several hours, no word came from Baker Company.

Finally, radio contact was made, and when asked for a report of their situation.

"The enemy is to the east of us. The enemy is to the west of us. The enemy is to the south of us. The enemy is to the north of us." Then, after a brief pause, a voice continued,

"And this time, we're not going to let them escape."

Our enemy is at every turn. In this raging war, we are either winning or losing.

Paul tells us of our deadliest weapon against the enemy:

- The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

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.

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: You are reading the Word when the words seem to suddenly come alive, take on flesh and bones and leap off the page at you. Sometimes, God's Word seems to grow eyes that follow you around or it develops a voice that echoes in your ears until you cannot get away from it. Perhaps in a moment of temptation or doubt when you are assailed by "the flaming arrows," a passage of Scripture that supplies the answer comes flashing to your mind.

Perhaps, someone asks you a question and you can't recall a Scripture. Suddenly, you have a moment of illumination and a word of Scripture comes to your mind to provide the answer.

Steadman: The rhema-word of God in your life is called "the sword of the Spirit" because it not only originated by the Spirit as the author of the Word, but it is also recalled to your mind by the Spirit and made powerful by Him in your life. It is His specific, well-chosen answer to the attack of the devil. Like a swordsman with a trusty blade in his hand, the Spirit brings a flashing, sharp-edged, highly polished word to our mind to parry the sword-thrust of the devil.

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. [Context: Spiritual warfare]

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.

Gen. 3:1 Satan is more crafty.

Eph. 6:10-12 Satan operates with mighty powers.

Luke 4:10-11 Satan knows the Bible.

Luke 4:13 Satan waits for a more opportune time.

The Sword of The Spirit which is The Word of God

The words of God recorded in the Bible are given to us as a weapon for active attack and defense as we face our Christian battles.

Pilgrim's Progress: Christian is on his pilgrim journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. This journey proves to be very dangerous with many obstacles along the way.

When Christian came to House Beautiful, he met Watchful, the porter of the Palace.

He met with the porter's daughters who showed him many different trophies of war with which the Old Testament saints had won battles.

- Then they equipped Christian with the armor of God.
- They offer to go with him and lead him, but he says he is ok, there is no need.
- Almost immediately, he tumbles downhill and lands in the Valley of Humiliation.

Great-heart comments: "It is the best and most fruitful piece of ground in all these parts. Behold how green this valley is, how beautiful with lilies. I have known many laboring men that have got good estates in the Valley of Humiliation."

James 4:6 God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

- Christian's experience in this valley is a result of his need for humility.

Christian lands in the Valley of Humiliation and meets Apollyon.

- Apollyon, the destroyer, the adversary, was a hideous monster clothed with scales like a fish, wings like a dragon and feet like a bear.
- Out of his belly belched forth fire and smoke through a mouth like that of a lion.

His terrifying appearance causes Christian to fear. Should I go back or stand my ground?

- His thought of turning to flee immediately makes him sensitive to the vulnerability of his unprotected back. Fiery darts would be certain to find this exposed target and bring about his fall. Hence, he realizes that his safest course is to face the enemy head-on.

Note: Satan is presented as a serious and implacable foe, a foul fiend, a hellish tyrant.

In earthly warfare, to underestimate the enemy is to court defeat.

To treat the wiles and subtlety of Satan lightly [II Cor. 11:14-15], as though his ways and strategy were easily recognized and overcome, is to play the fool.

When Apollyon drew near to Christian, he looked down upon him with a contemptuous, sneering expression, and then commenced to question him. He told him to "put down your sword."

1. He challenges Christian's change of allegiance

Christian: I have come from that place of all evil, the City of Destruction, and am heading toward the City of Zion. I am the Lord's servant. I am determined to follow Him.

2. He questions the worth of trials along the way.

Apollyon: Consider what it will be like when your spirit is low. You are aware that, for the most part, His servants come to a wretched end because they are transgressors against me and my ways. How many of them there are who have been shamefully put to death! Furthermore, while you count His employment better than mine, yet He has never come from His heavenly residence to rescue any of His servants out of our hands. On the other hand, all the world well knows that I have, so many times, used my power and fraudulent schemes to deliver those who have faithfully served me; even when they were captured by He and His followers. Still, I have rescued them, and so I will also deliver you.

Christian: His present restraint in delivering them is for the purpose of testing their faith, that is proving whether they will be loyal to Him to the end. As for the sorry end that you declare is their destiny, why they are assured of receiving future glory. In fact, they do not expect present deliverance; rather they are content to wait for their glory in the future.

Then they shall certainly have it when their Prince comes in glory along with the angels.

Note: Christian replies with unwavering faith. His instruction received at the Palace Beautiful [by the Holy Spirit] is proving to be worthwhile, He is demonstrating the virtue of Patience.

3. Apollyon begins to describe all of Christian's unfaithfulness up to this point.

Here, as "the accuser of our brethren" [Rev. 12:10-11], Apollyon plays one of his most effective roles. Night and day his taunting darts frequently wound and produce great pain.

The pilgrim's feeble protests are shouted down with mocking charges of hypocrisy and failure. Christian confesses his sin yet stands his ground.

4. Apollyon Assails Christian with Rage and Onslaught

He roars at Christian: "I am an enemy to this Prince: I hate his person, his laws, and people: I am come out on purpose to withstand thee."

Christian: Apollyon, beware what you do; for I am in the King's highway, the way of holiness: therefore, take heed to yourself!

Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said,

"I am void of fear in this matter: prepare thyself to die! for I swear by my infernal den that thou shalt go no farther; here will I spill thy soul."

5. A horrific fight ensues. APOLLYON sends flaming arrows and darts thick as hail.

Recall: Flaming dart is an arrow dipped in pitch and set afire. It is intended to ignite combustible material, to bring pride to the boil, to cause lust to burn, to make anger rage, to enflame jealousy. [[II Cor. 10:3-6]

Christian took up his shield of faith which blunts and extinguishes fiery darts.

Christian draws his sword with two sharp edges which is suitable for quick thrusting at close quarters. It is the "sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."

➤ It is the rhema of God which is applied to specific situations.

Rhema: Verse of portion of Scripture that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention with application to a current situation or need for direction.

Key Point: Progress can only be made when the sword of God's Word is used offensively so the enemy is forced to yield his obstructing stance. [James 4:7]

Christian receives a hail of darts. When assailed with the Word, Apollyon responds savagely, and possibly with the ancient taunt, "Has God said?" [Gen. 3:1]. His shower of skeptical arrows, each one being crafted by destructive liberal devils, seemed almost overwhelming."

6. Apollyon wounded him in his head, his hand, and foot.
 - A footnote explains he was wounded in his understanding, in his faith and in his walk.
 - Head is wounded: Did he have his helmet of salvation securely in place?
 - Foot is wounded: Were his gospel shoes of peace damaged?

Note: This "sore combat lasted for above half a day, while Christian doggedly resists with diminishing strength due to his wounds.

He courageously revives, yet falters more frequently.

Thus Apollyon, sensing greater weariness in his opponent, presses the staggering pilgrim back.

- He comes with full force against Christian and begins wrestling with him.
- Christian falls to the ground and his sword flies out of his hand.
- The adversary is about to strike the fatal blow.

William Gurnall: When the enemy hath hold of one there is no declining, but either he must resist manfully, or fall shamefully at his enemy's foot. Satan comes close up, and gets within the Christian, takes his hold of his very flesh and corrupt nature, and by this shakes him.

7. Then said Apollyon, "I am sure of thee now."

- He had almost pressed him to death, so that CHRISTIAN began to despair of life.

William Gurnall: Christian has lost his confidence in the Word and use of the Word. His heart is no longer being replenished with fresh servings of spiritual nutrition, nor is he emboldened to go on the offensive.

Gurnall: David's preservative. Ps. 119:11 Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee. It was not the Bible in his hand to read it; nor the word on his tongue to speak of it, nor in his head to get a notional knowledge of it; but the hiding it in his heart, that he found effectual against sin.

8. Christian nimbly reaches out and retrieves his sword.

Ps. 119:50 He is reanimated with the recovery of his sword because "this is my comfort in my affliction, that Thy word has revived me."

Micah 7:8 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! When I fall, I shall arise!

- And with that gave him a deadly thrust. Christian, came at him again, saying,

Rom. 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

"And with that, Apollyon spread forth his dragon's wings and sped him away, that Christian, for a season, saw him no more."

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

Key Point: He retires, as was the case when repudiated by Christ (Matt. 4:11), to snare pilgrims who are not so well equipped and faithful.

9. When the battle was over, Christian said, "I will here give thanks to Him that hath delivered me out of the mouth of the lion."

David skillfully used his sling to slay the giant Goliath and yet declared that "the battle is the Lord's" [I Sam. 17:47], so Christian deftly used his sword and yet gave all praise in his victory to his Prince.

10. Christian recovers through providential means of grace.

Then there came to him a hand, with some of the leaves of the Tree of Life. Christian took them and applied to the wounds that he had received in the battle and was healed immediately. He also sat down in that place to eat bread, and to drink of the bottle that was given him a little before. So being refreshed, he addressed himself to his journey, with his sword drawn in his hand. He said, "I know not but some other enemy may be at hand." But he met with no other affront from Apollyon through this valley.

Pilgrim has matured as a soldier. He has entered into spiritual manhood and thus is better prepared to meet further assaults.

So he presses on, now walking far more circumspectly [Eph. 5:15].

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.