Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Believer's Armor, Part 7: The Sword of the Spirit
Scripture: Ephesians 6:17
Code: 1961

This morning we come to our last study in the armor of the Christian. We want to examine the last piece of the Christian's armor. Verse 17, finally, as Paul expresses what is needed for the believer to overcome Satan and his hosts he says take the sword of the Spirit which Is the word of God. Old Dr. Guthrie said, "The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons. A laboratory of infallible medicines. A mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road. A chart for every sea. A medicine for every malady and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun."

One writer said the authorship of the Bible is so wonderful. "There are words written by kings, by emperors, by princes, by poets, by sages, by philosophers, by fishermen, by statesmen, by men learned in the wisdom of Egypt, educated in the schools of Babylon and trained at the feet of rabbis in Jerusalem. It was written by men in exile, in the desert, in shepherd's tents, in green pastures and beside still waters. Among its authors we find a tax-gatherer, a herdsman, a gatherer of sycamore fruit. We find poor men, rich men, statesmen, preachers, captains, legislators, judges and exile. The Bible is a library full of history, genealogy, ethnology, law, ethics, prophecy, poetry, eloquence, medicine, sanitary science, political economy and the perfect rules for personal and social life. And behind every word is the divine author God Himself."

Of the authorship of the Bible, John Wesley said, "The Bible must have been written by God or good men or bad men or good angels or bad angels." And then he said, "But bad men and bad angels wouldn't write it because it condemns bad men and bad angels. And good men and good angels wouldn't deceive by lying as to its authority and claiming that God wrote it." "And so", said Wesley, "the Bible must have been written as it claims to have been written by God who by His Holy Spirit inspired men to record His words using the human instrument to communicate His truth." I don't know if we even understand the fullness of what it means to have the sword of the Spirit. I'm quite confident we don't. This incredible, matchless, incomparable book is the final weapon, the final element of armor given to the believer in the battle against Satan. And the sad fact is that so many Christians do not really know how to use it. We fall victim to Satan because of an ineptness with the sword. Do you realize what kind of a book this is? Do you really realize what you have in your hand as you glance at its words and its pages? Let me just tell you. Let me tell you what the Bible claims for itself.

First of all, the Bible claims that it is infallible. That means that it is without error in total. That the sum of it all makes no mistakes. That it is faultless, flawless, without blemish. In Psalm 19:7 it says; "The law of the Lord is perfect." In its total, it is infallible.

Secondly, in its parts it is inerrant and that means that there is no error in it. In Proverbs 30 verses 5 & 6 it says, "Every word of God is pure." Every word. "Add thou not to His words lest He reprove thee and thou be found a liar." And so His word is infallible in total, inerrant in part.

Thirdly, it is complete. Revelation 22:18 and 19 says, "If any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book and if any man shall take away the words of this book God shall take away his part from the tree of life." In other words, you can't add to it and you can't take away from it and that means it is complete.

Fourthly, the Bible is authoritative. In Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 2 we read; "Hear oh heavens and give ear oh earth for the Lord hath spoken." When God speaks everybody better listen; that's what it means when it says it's authoritative.

Further, the Bible is sufficient. In II Timothy chapter 3 it says: "That it is sufficient to make you wise unto salvation, it is sufficient to make you perfect thoroughly furnished to all good works". This book can bring you to salvation and bring you to perfection. There is nothing other than that that is needful. So the Bible is infallible in total, inerrant in part, complete, authoritative and sufficient.

Sixth, it is effective, it is effective. When it speaks things happen. The Bible changes things. The word of God works transformation. In Isaiah 55; "So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth, it shall not return void but shall accomplish what I please." It is effective. Listen, if I didn't believe that I wouldn't preach it. The reason I preach it is because I believe it will do what it says it will do.

Seventh, it is divine. II Peter 1:21, it says; "That the scripture did not come from any private interpretation, it came not from the will of man but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." It's God's book. Now listen, a book that is infallible, inerrant, complete, authoritative, sufficient, effective and divine is a book that ought to be cherished.

For one other reason, it is also determinative. What a person does with a Bible reveals his relationship to God. Jesus said; "He that is of God hears God's word, ye are not of God therefore you hear them not". If you listen to the Bible it shows you belong to God. If you don't, it shows you don't The Bible, then, becomes a determiner in the sense of a man's eternal destiny and his relationship with God. What an incredible book. There is no book in existence in the universe that can make these claims and substantiate them, only the Bible.

What does the Bible do for you? What does the Bible offer you? What resources does it bring to you? Well, let me just suggest a few. First of all, it's the source of truth. And John 17:17 says, "Thy word is truth." It's the truth about life, death, time, eternity. The truth about heaven and hell, the truth about right and wrong, the truth about men and women, the truth about old people and young people, the

truth about children, the truth about society, the truth about every relationship between God and man, every relationship between man and man and every relationship between man and creation. The truth about everything that's needful.

Secondly, the Bible is a source of happiness. We see the world around us chasing happiness like mad, just furiously chasing happiness and the simplicity of scripture is this, Proverbs 8:34; "Happy is the man who hears Me." The simplicity of the statement of Jesus in Luke 11:28, "Happy are they who hear the word of God and obey it." That's happiness. The Bible, frankly, no man is happier then he who discovers truth. The other night on television I was watching an interview with a lady who had been raped and the interviewer said to her, “What have you learned through this?” And she said, “Oh, I've grown through this.” And the interviewer said, “Well, that's really wonderful, that's what life is all about - growing.” But, I agree life is all about growing but not growing in the way that they think. Growing in the knowledge of the word of God. Because Peter says, "Grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." How do you do that? Again, the word is the source of growth. In Peter he says, I Peter 2:2, "As babes desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow thereby." Listen, the Bible is a source of truth, the Bible is a source of happiness, the Bible is the source of growth.

And then the Bible is the source of power. We're really impotent in our lives if we don't use God's word. The Bible is the source of our power. "The word is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword." Further, the Bible is the source of guidance, Psalm 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The Bible is a source of comfort, Romans 15:4 talks about the comfort of the scripture. The Bible is the source of perfection, II Timothy 3:16, "That the man of God may be perfect!" The Bible is the source of so many things. This incredible book that never has an error, never makes a mistake is always sufficient and complete and authoritative and effective and determinative can bring to your life truth and happiness and growth and power and guidance and comfort and perfection.

And one other thing, the Bible is the source of victory over the enemy. And with that we arrive at Ephesians 6:17. It is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God that gives us the weapon against our enemy. And beloved, that's why I preach the word of God. That's why we systematically teach the word of God. Because, you see, it wouldn't even matter if all of those other things I said about were true if you never learned it. You would have at your disposal a resource never used. And so we believe systematically week after week after week in teaching the word of God. Why? Because it gives you the source of truth, the source of happiness, the source of growth, the source of power, the source of guidance, the source of comfort, the source of perfection, the source of victory.

Now we know in Ephesians 6 that we're in a war. Right? That was made clear to us in verses 10 to 12. And if you look back at verses 10 to 12 you will reiterate again the war that we're involved in. We are wrestling against Satan and his demons. As Christians we've been given a resource in Christ. We

are literally blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavens. We know how we are to live, that's laid out in Ephesians 4, 5 and 6. We know what our resources are, that's in Ephesians 1, 2 and 3. The reservoir is there and we've learned how we are to apply it.

Now we are facing the reality that Satan resists that application. Satan tries to stymie our productivity. He wants to stop us from living out our position. And the way we overcome his hindrance is to have the armor on. And we've discussed the belt of truthfulness in verse 14 which is commitment. And we've discussed the breastplate of righteousness which is holiness. And we've discussed the shoes of the gospel of peace which is confidence In the Lord's power and presence. We've discussed the shield of faith which is believing God. We've discussed the helmet of salvation which is confidence in the eternal salvation yet to come. And now we come, finally, to the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Now listen, the previous armor has been primarily defensive but now we come to a piece of armor that is both defensive and offensive. I've heard people say that this is offensive. It is more than that it is defensive as well.

Now the word sword here is a very interesting term. It is the word in the Greek “makaira” and it's a very common word in Greek, a very common word even in the New Testament. The other word for sword, “romphaia,” refers to that large broad sword we talked about last week. It could be as long as forty inches plus, longer than a yardstick, a great, broad, two-edged sword that was wielded with two hands. That is not in view here. This is the more normal sword carried by the soldiers, the “makaira,” anywhere from six inch long daggers to 18 inch swords or so. They were put into a sheath or a scabbard by the side of the soldier and were used in hand-to-hand combat. That's what's in view. In fact, by the way, “makaira” is the word used to describe the swords in Matthew 26:47 that were in the hands of the Romans when they came to capture Jesus while He was in the garden. It was the normal Roman soldier's sword. It is the same word used to speak of the sword with which Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. It is the same word used, “makaira,” to speak of the sword used in Acts 12:2 to kill James the brother of John. It is the same word, “makaira” sword, used to speak of the sword used against the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. It is the normal sequence of sizes in this “makaira” concept that was the everyday routine sword used by soldiers. But in each case it seems apparent that a “makaira” had to be used in a rather precise way to be effective. Now Peter simply cut off an ear with it. I'm sure that if he had a “romphaia” held have come all the way from the ear to the tip of the guys toe. The “makaira” had to be used as a precise weapon.

Now this is the sword that Paul has in mind. It was the normal sword used by the Roman soldier. Now notice this, verse 17 he says it is the sword of the Spirit, “tou pneumatos of the Spirit” it could be translated. It literally could be translated by the Spirit or else it could be translated in an adjectival sense spiritual. You have all of these options. Perhaps the best two are these; first of all we can use it as an adjective and take the spiritual sword, small “s” not referring too much to the Holy Spirit but the spiritual sword because we know well that Paul said to the Corinthians in II Cor. 10:4 that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual. That's his implication there. And so we-are using

a spiritual sword. The fact that verse 12 says we are fighting spiritual wickedness, he's talking here about a spiritual sword. Of course, all of this is spiritual. We have really a spiritual belt and a spiritual breastplate and spiritual shoes and spiritual shield and a spiritual helmet. So that could be used in that sense. And by the way, “tou pneumatos” is used in an adjectival sense in Ephesians 1:3 and 5:19 so that would be a fair way to translate it in the context of the book. But perhaps better because it would be more consistent with the rest of the armor is to translate it in a, what we would call a genitive of origin. In other words, it's referring to where it comes from. The sword given by the Spirit. So that it is the sword of the Spirit in the sense that the Spirit has given it. But if you put both together you get this idea, our sword is spiritual because it was given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Now when you became a Christian you received the sword in what sense? You have the Bible. You say, “Well, even an unbeliever has the Bible.” Yes, an unbeliever has the Bible but does not have the resident truth teacher, the Holy Spirit, who can make the Bible meaningful. Right? That’s why in I John it tells us, in chapter 2, that we have an anointing from God and we nknow all things! We have a resident truth teacher. It is the Spirit of God living in the life of the believer who makes the word of God available to that believer. And so when you become a believer you receive the word of God and the Spirit of God and in conjunction you have the sword. And so the sword becomes ours as believers. But now it's a matter of how we learn to use the sword. And, you know, all Christians possess the sword, we have it here and we have the resident Spirit of God so that it is a spiritual sword, it becomes a weapon.

Listen, beloved, the Bible in your life is a weapon. No question about it. It's a weapon. It's only a matter of whether you know how to use it. And learning how to use it is dependent upon how diligently you get involved in studying the word of God. That's why the apostle Paul spent three years in Ephesus and said, "I have not failed to declare unto you the whole council of God". Why? He wanted to teach them how to use the sword. He wanted to give them the whole thing so that they would be able to use it effectively.

So we have a spiritual sword, a sword not forged in human anvils or temperate in earthly fires. A sword that has a divine origin, a powerful, effective, amazing weapon that is all of those things that I said earlier about the Bible, incomparable, matchless in the hand of a believer. So powerful that nothing can withstand it and nothing can overpower it. I'll always remember reading King Arthur and the invincible sword. It pales in light of the invincibility of the word of God in the hand of a righteous saint who knows how to use it. The word then is our weapon, and it's powerful. It's powerful in Romans 1:16 it says, "So powerful", he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation". You wield this sword and people will get saved. You will literally use the sword as it were to tear away souls from the kingdom of darkness. With the sword you can cut a swathe through Satan's dominion. Powerful.

It can be used in judgment. In Hebrews chapter 4 where it says the word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword piercing even the dividing asunder of soul and spirit of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The word discerner there comes from “krino” which means to judge by sifting out the evidence. The word of God becomes that which judges people. You preach the word and it brings to bear on their life the judgment of God. And it sits and weighs their life in the balance of the authority of the word of God to show them the fact or reality of their sinfulness.

The next verse he says that's why, Hebrews 4:13, "no creature can hide himself but everyone is made naked before God's word." God's word comes like a sword resting souls from the kingdom of darkness. God's word comes like a sword piercing into the hearts of men, splitting them open, sifting the evidence and showing them their own sin and guilt before a holy God. This is a powerful weapon. It is so powerful it can bring truth into error. It is so powerful it can bring happiness into sadness. It is so powerful it brings light to darkness and shows you the way. It is so powerful it changes sorrow into joy. It is so powerful that it changes stagnation into growth. It is so powerful it takes an infantile person and makes them mature. This is a powerful thing. This is what we hold in our hands; the sword of the Spirit. Now let me hasten to add this, the sword as a weapon is both defensive and offensive.

Let's talk about its defensive capability. If you've ever seen anybody use a sword you know that a sword is used as much to parry a blow as it is to inflict one. And a person who uses a sword uses it along with that part which covers his hand to defend himself against the blows of his enemy. And the way you use the word of God defensively is really critical. Satan comes to attack you with his temptations. He comes to attack you with his assaults and you can literally parry his blows with the proper use of the word of God.

For example, we see our Lord, don't we, in Matthew chapter 4 and in Luke chapter 4 and Satan comes to Him three times and Satan attacks Him with three direct temptations. Number one is to don't trust God, make stones into bread ,don't wait for God to supply your needs, grab it on your own. And Jesus comes back and quotes scripture exactly related to that temptation out of Deuteronomy. Satan comes a second time and says, “Furthermore I'm going to tempt you now to trust God where you have no business trusting God, dive off the temple and let Him catch you.” And He uses another scripture from Deuteronomy exactly dealing with that temptation. Third time, Bow down to me. And He uses another scripture exactly dealing with that temptation.

In other words, precisely He uses the “makaira” of the word, He doesn't flail It around indiscriminately He uses it precisely to deal with exactly the temptation that Satan shot at Him. Listen, you have to be able to defend yourself at whatever angle the temptation comes from. And there are Christians who own Bibles and they've sat in churches and they've been in classes and they've even read it but they don't really know the principles and so they can't stop the attack at one point or another. And I've

always discovered that Satan will find out where you don't have that information and that's where he'll start hitting.

I've heard so many people say this that I hate to think of even numbering them, “Oh, I didn't know the Bible taught that or I never would have done it.” And they get themselves into situations they would not have been in had they known the truth. Use the Bible as a defensive weapon. Learn how to apply the specifics of the word of God to the specifics of temptation. Let me go a step further. Notice at the end of verse 17 it says the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. The term word here is not logos, logos is a term meaning word that speaks of a broad or general reference. The word of God, the general idea. It is the word “rhema” and it means a specific statement. It isn't talking about a broad knowledge it's talking about a specific statement. The sword of the Spirit is the specific statement of God. And if you don't know what God specifically says about that temptation you can't deal with it. So that you must learn to know the total of the word of God so that you know the specifics. That's why when I teach you the Bible I don't just read you the scripture, tell three stories then send you away. What I try to do is teach you the principles in the text. because the principle is the specific statement that God wants you to understand so that you can put it in your reservoir to use against Satan.

Listen, beloved, you must learn the principles of the word of God and that's why you have to study to show yourself approved unto God. Do you remember those in Revelation 12 who overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony? You will overcome Satan when you know the word. See? And you can give testimony to it. And so in the sense of defending ourselves we are dependent on our knowledge of the Word of God. And the reason so many Christians fall to temptation is because they just don't know how God's Word deals with things. They just aren't equipped with the sword. Now you have it, equip yourself with its proper use.

Secondly, it's an offensive weapon. And I love to think of it this way. I use the word of God in my life to defend myself against Satan's attacks. Whenever Satan hits me with discouragement I think of verses that relate to that. I had a man come to me after the first service this morning and he said - What Bible verses do you use when you get sorrowful? And I gave him an answer to his question. He said, - Well, I want to know what Bible verses you use when you want to renew your commitment? He was asking me the right questions. Do you know where to go to defend yourself against sorrow and defend yourself against discouragement and defend yourself against a lack of commitment, against the temptation to the lust of the eyes, to the lust of the flesh or the pride of life? Do you know how to go against those things? That's how you use it defensively. But what about the offense? This is the exciting part. I'm glad it's both because I'd hate to live my whole life just trying to be defensive. That gets old. Every once in a while I get offensive, that's why I love to preach because when I'm preaching I don't have time for any temptations. I don't mess with that stuff, up here. I've got my offensive sword going and all I'm trying to do is whack away some of the jungle in Satan's kingdom. And that's what's exciting.

Every time I take the gospel to an unsaved soul I see myself with the sword whacking through his dominion. Every time somebody is redeemed I see a swathe cut through his dark kingdom. When you stand up and proclaim the word of God, you teach it to your children, you talk about it to your friends, you say it on the job, you talk with other students at school about it or you stand in a pulpit like this and preach and you have in your hand the word of God as an offensive weapon and you're cutting your way through Satan's kingdom. I love to be interviewed by somebody who's confused about a certain thing in our society and say this is what God says, you see, and attack the system with the sword of the Spirit. I love to be able to stand against the opposition and say this is what God's truth has to say.

Now Satan knows the word is effective so he tries to stop it. Look at Matthew 13, Satan will do anything to silence those who preach the word. He'll do anything to try to undo what they do. You remember the parable Jesus told about the sewer and the seed? We don't have time to go into detail now we will later on in our series in Matthew but I want you to see what applies to our thoughts this morning. "Jesus went out of the house and sat by the seaside and great multitudes were gathered unto Him and He went into a boat and He sat, and the multitude was on the shore, and He spoke and He gave them a parable about a sewer who went forth to sow. And when he sowed some of the seed fell by the wayside and the fowls came and devoured it. Some fell in stony places. They didn't have much earth and they sprang up because they had no deepness of earth and when the sun was up they were scorched and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprang up and choked them. Other seeds fell into good ground and brought forth fruit some hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold. Who hath ears to hear let him hear."

Now later on in verses 19 and following He describes the answer to what this means. But just stay where you are for a minute and I'll just relate it to you. The sewer is the preacher or anybody who has the Word of God, the seed is the Word of God. You go out sowing the seed. In a sense you're using your sword. What is the result? You lay your sword to bear and things are going to happen. Verse 8 says when it finds good ground, boy, fruit's going to come forth a hundred fold, sixty fold and thirty fold. So Satan knows it can do this. So Satan is busy trying to make sure it doesn't. So when you sow it and it falls, for example, in verse 4 on the wayside, immediately the fowls come and devour it and it seems to me this has reference to Satan's demonic hosts. Somehow they move it and snatch the word away so that the person has forgotten what he's heard. And somebody will come and hear the word and maybe you've talked to him or I've preached, whatever, and they go away and they just forget about it. Satan snatches it out of their mind.

On the other hand verse 5 says some of it falls on stony places and what happens? It doesn't have much earth so it springs up for a little while, there's no deepness of earth, the sun comes up, burns it, it has no root and withers away. And later on in the chapter our Lord says this has to do with persecution. Somebody comes along and says, “Boy you know, this Christianity is interesting. I'm

hearing what you're saying about this Bible truth and Satan will bring into their life trouble” and they'll say, “Boy, God, You're not such a good guy after all” and they'll bail out and walk away from it. Under the pressure of persecution or tribulation or whatever.

And, finally, some of it falls among thorns and the thorns spring up and choke it and our Lord says that's the kind of people who come and they believe for a little while but the deceitfulness of riches. They are not willing to say No to the evil system. They want the world so they walk away from the Word. But the point that I want you to see is that Satan is busy, whether by twisting the perspective back to the world or by bringing heat to bear on their life or by snatching it away so they don't remember it. He wants to stop the sowing of the seed. Why? Because he knows that if it finds good ground it will produce, and that's what is exciting. If I didn't believe the word of God would produce I'd quit preaching and do something else. But it's so fantastic that you can know that when you go out the Word of God will never return void but will always accomplish what I please.

This is a powerful word, beloved. So powerful the Bible says it converts the soul. No word of man can route the spiritual hosts of wickedness, only the Word of God. So it is defensive as we know it to defend ourselves, it is offensive as we go out and conquer Satan's dark kingdom. And again may I remind you that when you use the word of God offensively it has to be specific?

You know, have you ever gotten into a conversation and you didn't have any answers for the person because you didn't know what the Bible taught about a certain thing? You say, well some people say, “Boy, I'd get into witnessing but I'm afraid I don't have any answers. Somebody's going to ask me a question and I'm going to say, Oh, I don't know.” Which isn't bad to say if you don't, go find out. But, you know, if you're going to be effective at communicating you've got to know the word so you can be instant in season and out of season. Right? So that you can give to every man that asks you a reason for the hope that is within you. So that you have an answer, Peter said. We need to know the word of God.

Walter Martin says, The tragedy of Christianity is that a ninety day wonder out of Jehovah's Witnesses can take apart a Christian in thirty minutes. And in many cases that's true. We just really don't know the word like we should. Because we don't know it like we should we can't defend ourselves and we can't use it as an offensive weapon. Oh, the more you know the word the more you're going to march through Satan's kingdom because God's Word has answers that cut right into the core of his lies. And so we need to know the word.

Illustration. We've often quoted Romans 10:17 this way, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God". That's a common way to quote it because that's the way the Authorized version quotes it. That is not the way the Greek renders it at all. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. That's so general. Do you mean to say saving faith can come from any part of the Word of God? You can read some verse out of the Bible and it doesn't matter what verse it is and faith can come by

hearing that? No. The Greek says, Faith comes by hearing a “rhema,” a specific statement about Christ, “Kristos.” Faith doesn't come by generality it comes by specific statements about Christ. And people can't get saved unless they hear that Jesus Christ died and rose again the third day for their justification. There must be specifics in the offensive use of the word, specifics in the defensive use and there's no sense in being victimized. The tragedy of tragedies is for someone to be a Christian for a long time and not be able to use this incomparable source that God has graciously given us. You say, “But, oh I'll tell you, I've kind of picked my way around in there and I don't understand it.”

Listen to me, don't give me any of that baloney, don't tell me you don't understand it. He not only gave you the book, He planted in your heart the resident truth teacher and He'll teach it to you if you'll submit to His teachings. Nobody's going to be able to plead ignorance. I don't understand those big words. You can understand, God will enable you to understand as much as you need to understand to win the victory. It isn't that tough, I understand it. And I work hard at it that's all, that's all.

If anything is ever good, it indicates that somebody's put a lot of effort into it. That's the way it is in your life. Just because you own a Bible doesn't mean you have a sword. You can own a Bible warehouse and not have a sword, if you don't know how to use it defensively and offensively. Jesus gave us the pattern, He said, "What does the scripture say?" That's how to live life, that's how to approach temptation, that's how to approach ministry. In Acts 17 it says “The Bereans were more noble then the others because they searched the scriptures.” That's true nobility.

A biographer of Martin Luther writes this; "Luther was held in darkness by the devil even though he was a monk. He was trying to save himself by works. He was fasting and sweating and praying and yet he was miserable and unhappy and in constant bondage. Superstitious Roman Catholic teaching held him captive but he was delivered by the word of scripture, "the just shall live by faith." From that moment he began to understand this word as he had never understood it before and the better he understood it the more he saw the errors taught by Rome. He saw the error of her practice and so became more intent on the reformation of the church. He proceeded to do all in terms of exposition of scriptures. The great doctors in the Roman church stood against him. He sometimes had to stand alone and meet them in close combat and invariably he took his stand upon the scripture. He maintained that the church is not above the scripture. The standard by which you judge even the church, he said, is the scripture. And though he was one man at first standing alone he was able to fight the papal system and twelve centuries of tradition and he did it by taking up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Listen, there never would have been a reformation if one man hadn't been able to stand up against the erudite errorists of the papal system and counter their arguments with the word of God. Our Protestant fathers in this country did precisely the same thing. It was one weapon which they used repeatedly. The Puritans did it. Early in Protestantism, you know, they decided that every Christian ought to have a Bible. Why? If you don't have a Bible you don't have a sword. And it was Tyndale's

vow that every plowman and every boy that pulled a plow would be able to read and understand to safeguard against the encroachment of another period of dark ages. He said the way to make people strong is to give them the knowledge of the word of God. And it was that great anxiety for accurate knowledge of the Bible that led to reliable translation of the scriptures into your language and mine. We can thank God for those people. It is essential that the word of God be known. It is essential if we're to win the battle.

H. P. Barker was a master of illustrations. One day he described himself looking out a window and watching a garden full of plants and flowers. And he said I saw three things in the garden. First, I saw a butterfly. The butterfly was beautiful and it would alight on a flower and then it would flutter to another flower and then it would flutter to another flower and only for a second or two would it sit and it would move on and it would touch as many lovely blossoms as it could but derived absolutely no benefit from it. Then, he said, I watched a little longer out my window and there came a botanist. And the botanist had a big notebook under his arm and a great big magnifying glass. And the botanist would lean over a certain flower and he would look for a long time and then he would write notes in his notebook. He was there for hours writing notes, closed them, stuck them under his arm, tucked his magnifying glass in his pocket and walked away. And then be said the third thing I noticed was a bee, just a little bee. But the bee would light on a flower and it would sink down deep into the flower and it would extract all the pollen that it could carry. It went in empty every time and came out full. And H. P. Barker said, so it is with people who approach the Bible. There are those who just flutter from lovely sermon to lovely sermon, from class to class, fluttering here, fluttering there, bringing nothing and gaining nothing. What a nice feeling.

Then there are the spiritual botanists who take copious notes who are trying to make sure that all the vowel pointings are correct but they don't have the capacity to draw anything out of the flowers, its pure academics. Then there are the spiritual bees who draw out of every precious flower all that is there to make the honey that makes them so blessed to those around them. Which are you? You can come to Grace Church and be a butterfly, you can flit from class to class, Bible study to Bible study, seminar to seminar, book to book, flipping your little pretty wings, never changing. Or you can be a botanist; some of you have enough notebooks to sink a small battleship. Or you can be a bee coming in empty and going out full and turning it into the honey that makes life sweet. Which are you? The sword is there, it's available. Are you using it?

My friend Rodney sitting over here, he doesn't know I'm going to talk about him for a minute. He sits over here always on Sunday and Rodney's in our special class. And when I first met Rodney, he was baptized not long ago, but Rodney had an old beat up Bible, I don't know if he brought it with him this morning, he has his new one don't you? Okay, he's got his new one. But he had an old beat up Bible and he reads a little tiny bit, just a few words. So he was getting his Bible, it looked pretty bad, he rides his bicycle, you know, and so his Bible was taking a beating in a paper cover. So one day I said to him, Rodney you need a new Bible. He said, Yeah, I need a new Bible. That's right. So I told him to

come with me to the book store and I'd get him a Bible. So we went to the book store and I said I know you don't read, Rodney, just read just a real little bit but what kind of Bible would you like? And he said, - Well, I want one with the numbers real big so I can see what verse you're talking about and watch it while you talk about it. Well, you know, that really struck my heart. And so we got a Bible with numbers big enough so he could see the numbers. And I thought about some of you. You can comprehend every concept there. You can fathom every principle there. It isn't just numbers to you and yet I wonder whether you're a bee drawing out of it all that is there and using it as a weapon to win the victory that's already yours in Jesus Christ. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for Your word. I can't help but think that in a sense the whole armor of God is nothing but a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the truth like the belt of truthfulness. He is our righteousness, our breastplate. He is our peace. His faithfulness makes our faith a reality. He is our salvation and He is the living word of God. Father, I know that this means that the moment we trust Christ we receive the armor. I think of the words of the apostle Paul who said, Wake up, cast off sin and put on the armor of light and then went on to say which is put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Father, in my heart I know that summing up all this armor, summing it all up and winning the battle we must put on Jesus Christ. We must be covered with His truth and truthfulness, with His righteousness, with His peace, with His confident faith in the Father, with His ultimate salvation, with His very life as the living word. Father, help us to appropriate those resources. Lord, there are some here today who are defenseless, powerless against the enemy because they haven't put on the Lord Jesus Christ, they have no armor. Oh, God, I pray that this might be the day that they receive Christ, that they put Him on and. be ready for the battle. I pray too for Christians who have all these resources and yet have never taken advantage, who don't really hunger for the word and thirst and crave for it. I pray for those who may have a marginal commitment to learn its great truths. Oh, God, draw us away from being complacent about Your book, save us from indifference which kills our usefulness and joy. Make us people of the word for Your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

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