

The Armor of God: The Sword of the Spirit

Scripture: Ephesians 6:17

Code: 90-368

In Ephesians chapter 6, we're looking at the armor of God, the believer's armor laid out for us by the Holy Spirit through the pen of the Apostle Paul. Paul has given all kinds of very foundational and important instruction in this letter to the Ephesians, instruction which has to do with living the Christian life, walking the worthy walk, as he speaks of it in chapter 4 which begins the practical section of this great epistle, the first three chapters being doctrinal. And he has laid out all kinds of things about behavior and how we are to conduct our lives and how we are to walk in the Spirit and manifest the power of the Spirit in every relationship.

And then there comes this necessary statement in verse 10 that to live this way and walk this way is going to demand strength. Finally verse 10 says of Ephesians 6, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." You're not going to be able to do this on your own. You're not going to be able to live in a way that honors God, to walk a worthy walk, to experience the fullness of the Spirit and the blessing that comes with that. Not going to be able to leave behind you the former things of your life and walk in newness of life easily. Not going to be able to grow, you're not going to be able to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, to speak truth, to be one in the body of Christ...all the things that he's been talking about in your own strength. This is something that requires the strength of the Lord.

And he envisions this in a very graphic kind of analogy as if he is looking at a soldier, no doubt a Roman soldier, of course, by the tens of thousands they filled the Mediterranean world during the time of Paul's ministry and were very familiar to all the people to whom he wrote and spoke. And so, in that analogy he says, "If you want to enjoy the strength of the Lord which it's going to take to live this kind of life, you must put on the full armor of God," verse 11. Because, you have an enemy that is going to do everything in his power to prevent you from living the way God wants you to live. It isn't that he particularly cares about you, it is that he wants to thwart the purposes of God. You need to mark it as sort of foundational in the relationship between Lucifer and God, Lucifer hates God. He hates God. And all his demons who once with him were among the angels of heaven and agreed to fall with him, a third of them to number them as Revelation does, equally hate God and the purposes of God and the objectives of God. And they hate God and manifest that hate in attempting to thwart the purposes of God that are basically operational in us. And so his assault against us is primarily an assault against God. It's a little bit like Paul saying, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ. People are wounding me and persecuting me not because of me, but because I represent Christ."

Understanding this, we read in verse 12, that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against these very categories of demonic beings called rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness, meaning the darkness that is Satan's darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies. So we are engaged in this warfare. And I delineated that for you a few weeks ago.

It is not that you are necessarily in hand-to-hand combat with demons all the time. I can say to you that in my entire lifetime I have never knowingly been engaged in a personal struggle with a demon. But I am daily engaged in a personal struggle against a demonically inspired system that comes at me and at my sinful tendencies through the world, through the system that is in the power of Satan who is the prince of this world. It is not that we as believers have demons running around in us, we are the temple of the Spirit of God, we are new creations, we have been transformed and changed. But we are assaulted by the system around us and we have tendencies to fall to that assault because of our remaining flesh, our fallenness which we will possess until we receive our heavenly inheritance and leave this world.

And so, against these assaults that come on us, we have to defend ourselves with the full armor of God, verse 13, to resist in the evil day and to be able to stand firm. Now wanting to give us an analogy that is memorable, Paul breaks down the parts which really become components of living a godly life.

Girding your loins with truth, or truthfulness means commitment, motivation to be obedient, motivation to be holy, to be godly, to be Christ honoring. We have to have that desire. In other words, establishing your priorities, pulling all the loose ends in like the Roman soldier would pull the corners of his tunic up and tie them tightly with his...with his belt so that he would be able to move freely in the midst of hand-to-hand combat, pulling everything together. It's about discipline for the struggle at hand, spiritual discipline.

And then he talks about putting on the breastplate of righteousness. And we talked about the fact that means practical, personal holiness. If you want to win the battle, the routine daily conflict with the world assaulting your flesh, you need to be living a holy life. A pattern of sin only makes you very, very vulnerable. And having your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace is to remember that, what holds you in the middle of the battle, what anchors you is the fact that you have made peace with God, that means God is on your side. God is your defender. God is your protector. And it's in that confidence that you fight the battle.

And those that are the things that are fixed in place. On top of those, in addition to all of those, you take the shield of faith. And the shield of faith is the thing with which you quench the temptations that Satan sends. We talked about the fact that you shield yourself from temptation by believing God. You either believe God or you believe Satan. When Satan comes with his deceptive lies that lure you into sin because he promises satisfaction, if you believe him you do it. If you believe the real

satisfaction is found in honoring God, then you do what is right. It's your faith in the Word of God that protects you from believing Satan's lies and deceptions that shields you.

The helmet of salvation, that idea that you have a future salvation which is secured to you, protects you against the blows of doubt that Satan would wield against you, sometimes telling you you're unworthy of the goodness of God. God isn't going to continue to bless you and be good to you because you're an unworthy sinner, preying upon you in the times of your weakness and faltering and making you think that you may not have a future with God. The helmet of salvation is the assurance of that eternal life which is to come. And when you live in the light of that assurance, it effects how you live now because you know you are a permanent citizen of that eternal kingdom. You are motivated to live as such.

That takes us to the last weapon in verse 17, or the last piece of armor which is the weapon and that is the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Now of all the weapons that we would talk about here, this is the...of all the pieces of armor, I should say, that we would talk about here, of all of these elements of Christian life, this is probably the one with which we are the most familiar. The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

When I originally taught this passage and through the years as I have had occasion here and there around the world to go back over this particular portion of Scripture, it has allowed me the opportunity to go back to some foundational things. And I think it's important to do that, kind of a basic look at Scripture.

You possess the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. You just need to pick it up and use it. The Bible is that sword. But not because you own one, but because you know what's in it. Being able to wield the sword is being able to use the truth of Scripture at any given point. Now we'll say more about that, but to begin with, let me give you a little bit of a brief course in what Scripture really is, what it claims for itself. It is the Word of God, that's what it says here, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. That and the Scripture and the Bible are the same thing.

What does the Bible claim for itself? We want to be able to trust in this weapon. We want to know that if we're going to pick up the Word of God and use it, that we're using the right instrument. If you, for example, question the inerrancy of Scripture, if you question the accuracy of Scripture, if you question the clarity of Scripture, if you question the integrity of Scripture, you're going to be reluctant to use it. If you equivocate on whether God wrote the Scripture, you're not going to be able to wield that. A high view of Scripture is necessary for the believer to be ready and eager to pick it up and use it at every occasion.

And that takes us back to what the Bible claims for itself. Let me just give you a little list, to begin with. First of all, the Bible claims to be infallible. That is without error. And it claims it again and again and again. Psalm 19:7, "The Law of the Lord is perfect." John 10:35, "The Scripture cannot

be broken.” Revelation 22:18 or 19, “Don’t take anything away from what is written here, or add anything to it, or there shall be added to you the plagues that are written in it. It is an inerrant text as well as an infallible text. When we say infallible, we mean that everything it affirms is true. When we say it is inerrant, we mean every word in it is true. It is true in all that it affirms, that’s infallibility. It is true in every single thing it says, that’s inerrancy. Proverbs 30 verses 5 and 6, “Every word of God is pure. EVERY word of God is pure.”

And it also says there, as it does in Revelation 22, “Add not unto His words lest He reprove you and you be found a liar.” Psalm 12:6 says, “The Scripture is so pure, every word of God is pure like...like silver that has been refined in a furnace seven times.” Psalm 119:140 says the same thing. “Your Word is pure.”

So the Bible is without error in all that it affirms, all it teaches. It is inerrant in every word...every word of God is pure. And then it is complete, as I noted from Revelation 22. You can’t add to it, you can’t take away from it. It is, as Jude puts it, the “once for all delivered to the saints faith.” It is one book, one revelation delivered once for all. There is no further divine revelation once the canon of Scripture is closed.

Because in all that it affirms it is without error, because in every single thing it says it is without error, because it is complete and there is no more to be added to it, nor is there anything to be taken away from it, it is therefore, fourthly, the authoritative Word of God. It is precisely what God wanted to say. And that is why Isaiah 1:2 says, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Since this is the infallible, inerrant complete authoritative Word of God, it is sufficient. We don’t need anything else. We do not need anything else. Psalm 19 lays that out a number of ways. It is sufficient not only for our salvation, converting the soul, but it is sufficient to make the simple, or the ignorant wise, fully skilled in all matters of holy living, is what that means.

In 2 Timothy 3 we remember that Paul wrote that from a child, speaking to Timothy, you’ve know the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. And then he said, “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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. That’s what I mean by sufficient. It is sufficient to achieve all divine ends in the soul.

This infallible, inerrant, complete and authoritative Word is sufficient to accomplish all God’s spiritual purposes in His people. We could add, too, that it is effective. It not only is sufficient for the person in whom it ministers, but it is effective through that person to have an impact on others. “So shall My Word be that goes forth out of My mouth, it shall not return unto Me void but shall accomplish what I please.” Whenever we declare the Word of God, whenever we teach the Word of God, whenever we proclaim the Word of God, it is effective. Or, if you like, it is powerful. It accomplishes God’s

purposes, Isaiah 55.

We could also sum all this up by saying what Peter said in 2 Peter 1, "Knowing this first that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation or origination for the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." There's no other book in existence that can claim these things. To be infallible, inerrant, complete, authoritative, sufficient, powerful, and divinely authored belongs only to Scripture. This is what the Bible claims for itself. As such, it is obviously a formidable weapon.

That is why we only need one weapon...we only need the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Old Testament writers refer to what they wrote as the Word of God about 3,800 times. New Testament writers refer to the Old Testament as the Word of God about 320 times. And they refer to the Old Testament about a thousand times. New Testament writers also claim that they are writing for God, that both Old and New are His words.

Now that tells you the nature of Scripture. Let me talk for a few minutes about what it does. We said it was powerful. We said it doesn't return void. It accomplishes the things to which God intends it. What does that mean? How do we sum that up?

Well let me just give you a few things you can think about. We said that's what the Word is, that's its nature, let's talk about its impact. First, it is the source of truth...it is the source of truth. It brings people to the knowledge of the truth. John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." It is the source of truth. It brings people to the knowledge of the truth, the way it really is.

Secondly, Scripture is the source of, well let's say because I think it will help you understand it, happiness, or blessedness. Proverbs 8:34, "Happy is the man who hears Me." Luke 11:28, "Happy are they who hear the Word of God and obey it." And that takes me back to this morning when we talked about the burning heart, remember, of the two on the road to Emmaus that were exposed to the explanation of the Old Testament, said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He explained to us the Scripture?" This is the burning of joy, of blessedness, the happiness that comes to one who understands...who understands the Scripture.

Scripture also is the source of growth. As babes, 1 Peter 2:2, desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. In this book you find the truth. In this book you find true joy, blessedness and happiness. In this book you find spiritual growth. It is also the source of power. It has a powerful impact. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation," Romans 1:16. "The Word is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword," Hebrews 4:12, cutting and piercing and dicing and slicing the human heart and revealing the inmost realities. It has the power to cut into the heart and it also has the power to heal the heart and restore it and sanctify it.

Scripture also claims for itself to be a source of guidance, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path," Psalm 119:105. Scripture also is the source of comfort, Romans 15:4 talks about the comfort of the Scriptures.

It is also the source of spiritual victory. And that's the way we see it in the context of Ephesians 6. So the nature of Scripture, what it claims for itself as to its own nature, and the claims of Scripture for its own impact, to bring truth and blessing and growth and power and guidance and comfort and now triumph or victory. When we put on the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes of the gospel of peace and pick up the shield of faith, put on the helmet of salvation, and lastly, grasp the sword of the Spirit, we are set for victory.

Now having said that by way of a broad look at Scripture, let's look more directly at the sword of the Spirit. And I guess maybe to start with, I would say that this is a weapon that is both defensive and offensive as any sword is. You would have to say that a rifle is purely an offensive weapon, it's not a defensive weapon. You don't sort of defend yourself with a rifle, you use it only as an offensive weapon, shooting something far away from you. But a sword in your hand was used perhaps more often to parry a deadly blow than it was to inflict one. For every blow that you might inflict that would cause the death or the wounding of your enemy, you may have staved off a dozen or more attacks against your own life. So this is both a defensive and an offensive weapon.

The word sword is machaira, a very common word in the Greek and used a number of times in the New Testament. It refers to a small sword, a small sword meaning anything from 18 inches down to maybe a foot long, even falling into the category of a dagger, a different word than rhomphaia which was the great long three or four-foot long sword that would be yielded with two hands. This is the kind of a sword that is in the hands of the Roman soldiers who came to capture Jesus Christ. It was a machaira that is mentioned in Matthew 26:47. This was the sword that every Roman soldier carried with him all the time. To put it in the modern vernacular, he didn't always have his rifle but he always had his pistol, he always had the small weapon. This, by the way, is the same kind of sword that Peter used to whack off the ear of Malchus. It is a machaira according to Acts 12:2 that killed James, the brother of John. Machaira were used to slay many of the heroes of faith. The word machaira is used to describe the slaughter of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:37.

So it's a very common weapon. It would be a lethal kind of weapon, much like some of those lethal knives that you see carried by people who have murderous intent in their minds. The sword which Paul has in mind is very familiar. In this case, however, it is the sword of the Spirit, tu pneumatos(?), may be used in an adjectival sense. It could be the spiritual sword if we use it as an adjective. Or it could be what we would call a genitive, genitive of origin, a sword given by the Holy Spirit.

I think the context might support both, that what we have here is a spiritual weapon that is essentially given to us by the Holy Spirit because the Scripture is authored by whom? The Holy Spirit. We just

read that, 2 Peter 1, men moved by the Spirit wrote the Scripture. So it is possible that it could be seen in its genitive sense, that is a sword given to us by the Spirit, it is also that it could be seen as an adjectival sense, that it is a spiritual sword, that is it's a sword to be wielded in the spiritual dimension. It is a Spirit-given, spiritual sword.

In fact, that ties so wonderfully into a text that I refer to a lot, and I'll do it again because it's germane to the point, 2 Corinthians 10, a little...it seems to me a little understood text. Second Corinthians 10 verse 3, "Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh." What he means by that is we walk in the flesh, he's not talking about sinning, he's simply saying we're humans, we live in a human body. We are human but we don't engage in war with human weapons, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. If they're not of the flesh, then they must be spiritual. If they're not carnal fleshly and human, they must be spiritual. And so this is exactly the same thing. This is making war with a spiritual weapon.

And he goes on to say, "This weapon which is not fleshly is divinely powerful." That again leans us in the direction of understanding this as a spiritual weapon, provided by the Holy Spirit.

In this imagery, however, it is something more than just a dagger. It is something more than just a small sword. This is a weapon powerful enough to destroy a fortress. And the word there means just that, a massive stone fortress. We assault these fortresses not with human weapons but with weapons that are not even a part of the flesh but rather have as their source and their power divine character. And as a result, we are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God.

What are the fortresses that we attack? They are speculations, logismos in the Greek, ideas, theories, viewpoints, any lie, anything that's anti-God, any concept, idea, theory, viewpoint, religion, philosophy that is raised up against the knowledge of God.

So in this sense we are seeing the offensive power of spiritual truth. The weapon is clearly the truth because the only thing that displaces error is truth. The only thing that smashes what is raised up against the knowledge of God is the true knowledge of God. The only way to bring down lies and deceptions, these ideologies, these anti-God concepts and bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is to bring the truth. And that's found in the Word of God. So it is a formidable weapon that we have. And we expand the idea of that weapon, moving from the passage in Ephesians 6 to this one, and now we see it in its great power to bring down an entire fortification. This would be human fortifications in which people have become imprisoned, wrong, damning ideologies, anti-God viewpoints. So we use spiritual weapons, namely the truth, the truth always found in the Word of God, to smash the anti-God lies and to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Our weapon in that sense, you can go back to Ephesians 6 now, our weapon in that sense is a spiritual weapon. And it is the Word of God. It is the truth. We have a spiritual sword given to us by the Holy Spirit and it is an awesome weapon. Our sword was not forged on human anvils or tempered in earthly fires. It is a weapon of divine origin provided for us by the Spirit of God to give us a powerful and effective instrument to use against everything that is raised up against the truth. Fleshly weapons, frankly, are useless in such a combat.

And again, what is it? It is the Word of God that is sharper as Hebrews says, than any other sword. And in itself is a two-edged sword, it cuts every way you use it. It is alive, it is powerful, dynamic, effective, it penetrates, it judges, krino is used in Hebrews 4:12, and no one escapes its power.

So it is an offensive weapon. At the same time, it is a defensive weapon. It is used against the thrusts of Satan. We fight with it, not only to advance the truth into the fortresses of deception in order to lead people to the truth, but we defend ourselves with it as well. Every other piece of armor covers some specific part of the body. The shield covers the whole body if we crouch behind it. And the sword is like that. It is a very general weapon, can defend us at any point where we are attacked.

What is this telling us? That your defense is going to be to know the truth. It doesn't do you any good to own a Bible if you don't know what is in it. It doesn't do you any good at all. To bring it down to what we're talking about, you're talking about a dagger that has to be used in a certain way. You can't just pick your Bible up and flail it in the air. It's not some great broad sword. It has to be used with precision. If you're in hand-to-hand combat, you can be poking a lot of places and accomplishing nothing until you strike the dagger at precisely the point that it needs to be placed in order to defend yourself or to inflict that mortal wound. It has to be used with great precision. We go forth into the kingdom of darkness, defending ourselves. And when Satan comes at us, if we are ignorant of a certain area of biblical truth, we are defenseless in that area.

It's amazing to me how many people come to me, write to me, talk to me in the interviews, radio programs, wherever I go and even in the front here on a Sunday morning and ask me questions about certain truths that are crystal clear in the Scripture about which they have absolutely no knowledge and consequently are vulnerable and defenseless at the point of their ignorance. If you're going to go forward into the kingdom of darkness and penetrate that darkness, you better know the truths of the Word of God so that you can defend yourself adequately against the deceptiveness of Satan. He's subtle. He's wily. He has very clever schemes, as they're called in verse 11. Satan doesn't like a fully taught congregation. Satan doesn't want you to know everything you need to know about the Word of God, about what God expects. Satan doesn't want you to understand all that Scripture teaches because he doesn't want you to be able to defend yourself against his deceptions.

But when you do come to know what Scripture teaches, you're like a spiritual young man who has overcome the evil one because you're strong in the Word and you've overcome the evil one, John

says. So if you don't know what Scripture teaches, you're highly vulnerable. And it's a sad thing that there are so many, many people so confused about things that are important, things that are issues of holiness because they haven't searched the Scriptures and come to know these things that are absolutely necessary.

By the way, to support this notion of the specificity with which we defend ourselves and the specificity with which we attack, I just would call to your attention that the word here for word, Word of God, is not logos. Logos is a familiar word to all of us, it is kind of a generic term, word, maybe a little broader term. The word here is rhema...rhema. And rhema means a specific utterance, a specific statement. We can only defend ourselves against the attacks of Satan in given areas if we know the specific statement of Scripture that defends us at that point. We can only attack the lies and deception, we can only liberate the captive souls if we know the specific teaching of Scripture that applies to that deception. It's the specific use of right Scripture, the divine principle that specifically applies.

Through the years it's been a commitment of mine, as you obviously know, to principle-ize texts, to draw out of any given text truth, call it a doctrine, call it a principle that is taught in that text. And then to chase that principle all around the Scriptures and support it. I've done that tonight talking to you about the authority and inerrancy of Scripture so that you have this principle in your mind, it's part of your arsenal and believe well that if there are areas that you are ignorant, Satan will find those areas and you'll find yourself defenseless there. Or if on the attack, useless to liberate someone from that very error. That's why we are instructed in 2 Timothy 2:15 to be diligent, to be approved of God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. We're to search the Scriptures to know what is taught there.

How do we do that? Well I think just some practical things maybe to suggest to you. First of all, this may sound pretty basic, read the Bible. How's that? Read the Bible. John Wesley was up at four o'clock to five o'clock every day and his biographer says he read the Bible in five languages. I'm just telling you that to make you feel really bad. I have enough trouble trying to read it in one language.

This comes from an internal motivation. There are some requirements to really digest Scripture. First of all, you have to be born again because the natural man doesn't understand the things of God. Secondly, you have to have a hunger, desire, like a baby desires milk. There has to be diligence like the Bereans in Acts 17, search the Scripture to see if these things are so. There needs to be characteristic purity and holiness in your life. James 1:21, "Putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness. In humility receive the Word implanted." You need to be filled with the Spirit for the only one who knows the things of God is the Spirit of God, 1 Corinthians 2.

So, to be a believer, to have a strong desire, to be diligent, to be holy, to be Spirit-filled then you go to the Scripture and you start by reading it...reading it repeatedly. And then, of course, interpreting it. It's not like an aspirin tablet, not like...people used to say to me, "What do you do in your daily

devotions?" If you mean reading the Bible without understanding it, I don't do that. Since I was a kid in junior high, reading the Bible and not understanding it was a problem. I never got very far in trying to read long sections of Scripture because I wanted to understand what I just read. This is interpreting the Scripture, digging down. You have to interpret it correctly. And that takes some...I guess 95 percent perspiration, five percent inspiration.

I think another part of the discipline is to correlate the Scripture. This is so helpful. Compare Scripture with Scripture. The Bible is a symphony. The Holy Spirit is the conductor. Every instrument has been brought to the orchestra to play its notes as the great conductor desired and it all comes together in a magnificent, unified whole. Meditate on the Bible. Meditate on it, sit back and think about it. Expand it in your mind. Give quiet attention to its truth.

And then maybe the most helpful thing you'll ever do is teach it. You're going to hold on to what you give away. Find some faithful men and teach them what someone taught you. These are the processes that make it your own. You read it, you interpret it, you correlate it with itself, you meditate on its truths, let them sink deep into your mind and then you teach it. And I will tell you by experience what you give away, you keep...you retain. This is how you become capable of using the sword effectively.

Putting on the whole armor of God is nothing more than in the end being able to use the Word of God effectively. In one sense I think the whole armor of God is a picture of Jesus Christ. It really is. It's a picture of Jesus Christ. He is the truth. He said that, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He is our righteousness, 2 Corinthians 5:21. He is our peace, Ephesians 2:14. It's His faith in His Father and His obedience to His Father's will because He trusted in His Father that took Him all the way to the cross. And so He, by the shield of faith, quenched all the fiery darts of the wicked one. He is the reason we have the hope of salvation. He is our salvation and He is the incarnate living Word of God.

In the end then, when you receive Christ, you receive the armor. Paul says, "Put it on." Romans 13:11 to 14, only he says it this way, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Cast off sin, put on the armor of light by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." It's just that basic. Christ's likeness then becomes the pattern, the model for us to follow. He used the Word of God, did He not?, to defend Himself. Matthew 4...Luke 4, tempted in the wilderness, every time Satan came at Him, what did He answer with? Scripture, the exact precise Scripture to defend Himself against that temptation. It's worth a look in Matthew 4.

Satan comes to Him in verse 3 and says, "If You're the Son of God, command these stones become bread." The temptation was to disobey God, to take authority, disregard what God had planned and grab some satisfaction for Himself. He deserved it. If You're the Son of God, why should You be hungry? Why should You go 40 days and 40 nights without eating? Grab some satisfaction, You have a right to it.

If He had been listening to some name-it and claim-it preacher and bought into that lie, He might have done that. But rather He answered, quoting from Deuteronomy, "Each time it is written, man shall not live on bread alone but every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." I do what God says, nothing else.

"If You're the Son of God, throw Yourself down," he says, having taken Him to the pinnacle of the temple. "Don't You have a promise in the Old Testament that the angels will protect You?" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written...again from Deuteronomy...you shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

Took Him into a high mountain, showed Him the kingdoms of the world in their glory which all would one day belong to Him. He says, "I'll give them to You now. You can bypass the cross." "Be gone, Satan. It's written, you shall worship the Lord your God, serve Him only." Christ was fully armed against Satan and He wielded the sword of the Spirit and used the precise, exact text against the precise temptation.

And so, to live the Christian life is simply to become like Jesus Christ as much as that is possible. And it's a daily appropriation. I remember, I think it's 2 Samuel 11 where King David took off his armor, returned to his palace and was in greater danger than he was on the battlefield. You know,, we're really never out of reach of Satan's devices. There's never really a time when we take off the armor. We leave it on all the time and that armor that we're not wearing at the moment can be immediately picked up for defense and for offense.

Some final thoughts on this, and I'll let you go. Second Timothy chapter 3 I referred to. Let me just take you there for a minute and remind you of what the Word of God does. Five things are listed here that are accomplished by the Word.

The first one is salvation in verse 15, "That from childhood you have known the sacred writings," meaning Scripture, "which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." That's why the Bible, according to Philippians 2:16, is called the Word of Life because it gives spiritual life. John 5:24, "He who hears My Word and believes in Me has eternal life." John 6:63, "The words I speak to you are spirit and life." Or John 20:31, "These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ and believing have life in His name. Or Romans 10:17, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word." Or Ephesians 5:26, "Cleansed by the water of the Word." And I love 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this reason we constantly thank God that when you received from us the Word of God's message, you accepted not as the word of men but for what it really is, the Word of God which also performs its work in you who believe." It has a saving power. "We're begotten again," 1 Peter 1, "by the word of truth."

So it is the Word that has the power to save. Now once we have been saved, what does the Word do? Well very familiar verse, verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching." Content, the body of divine truth that we live by. This is the treasure of biblical truth, the revelation of God to man.

It is also profitable for reproof, to confute, refute, convince, convict, rebuke. The idea here, to expose error and sin. So the Word of God has this positive effect of bringing truth and sound teaching that saves and sanctifies, at the same time it also cuts as Hebrews 4:12 puts it, it rebukes, it reproveth, it exposes error. That's bound up in correction which is the remedial side of reproof. You start with reproof and then you move to correction, making it right. Sending it in the right direction, epanorthosis, I think is how you say the word in the Greek. It means to straighten up, to thoroughly restore someone to an upright position.

So the Word comes, it saves. The Word comes, it establishes doctrinal truth. And then the Word cuts and breaks down and shatters the sinner, or the saint, for that matter, who comes under its power. And then it picks the sinner or the saint back up in a restoring work to an upright position. And then trains in righteousness, paideia which has to do with educating children, bringing them to maturity which is the positive side of correction.

So this is the power of the Word of God. For us in our own lives, to do its work and through us to impact the lives of others. Christ is the model. Putting the armor is putting on Christ.

Well I'll leave it at that. One further lesson, I think we'll look at next Sunday night, is the place that prayer plays in all of this because in verse 18 Paul says, "With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit." We'll talk about what that means. That's also critical as you go into battle, not to feel overly self-confident even in wielding the Word but being dependent on prayer and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Father, we thank You for our lesson tonight. Familiar things to us all but wonderful reminders of the greatness of Your Word and the purity of it, the power of it. Lord, we would ask that You would continue to draw into our church family people who need to hear the truth, who need to come under its power, its transforming power, both those who are outside the Kingdom, bring them that they might be saved. Bring believers who are out in the midst of the struggle and the battle and ill-equipped because they don't understand Your truth. They can't defend themselves with the specific knowledge of Scripture, they can't advance into the kingdom of darkness with a specific knowledge of Scripture because they don't know Your truth. Continue to spread Your truth across this world to Your glory and Your honor. Raise up many who will be faithful as there are many now, Lord, we need many, many more. We would even pray so boldly that You would silence those who misrepresent the truth and that You would raise into places of prominence those who speak the truth that the truth may be heard, the truth that saves and sanctifies. We thank You, Lord, that You've equipped us fully to be triumphant and victorious. We want to enjoy that victory even here and now until we enjoy it in its

fullness in Your presence in the future. We thank You for that promise and we live in that hope in the name of Christ. Amen.

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