

We come this morning to the sixth and final piece of Christian armor—having seen the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of peace, shield of faith, and helmet of salvation, we come now to the only specifically offensive weapon—the word of God, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God..."

Now—before I go further, let me first remind you of something that I trust is evident—Scripture is essential to the previous pieces of armor—it's only through the Scriptures we learn about these and are able to put them on, or take them up...

Thus—there is a sense in which, when Paul identifies the sixth piece of armor as the word of God, he's telling us—we take up the sword of the Spirit, by putting on these other pieces of armor—we take up the sword by putting on the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of peace, shield of faith, and helmet of salvation...

Now—don't misunderstand me, I do understand the sword of the Spirit as distinct piece of armor, or a distinct weapon for the Christian soldier (distinct from the rest), but we must keep in mind, these all form a single suit of armor...

- I. How is the Word of God a Sword?
- II. How is the Word the Spirit's Sword?
- III. How is the Sword of the Spirit taken up?

I. How is the Word of God a Sword?

1. First century Roman soldiers, had a short, two-edged sword, that more accurately could be defined as a dagger...
2. It was primary intended for hand to hand combat—it was used both as a defensive as well as offensive weapon...
3. MLJ—"There was no element of the offensive in any of the other five parts of the whole armor of God, but here there is. The sword serves a dual purpose, defensive and offensive. It is something whereby we can not only repel the enemy but also attack him..."
4. Thus—I suggest the word of God is likened to a sword for three reasons—it wounds, it exposes, and it protects...
5. [1] It wounds—that is, as a sharp sword, it cuts the conscience and pricks the heart—it brings conviction for sin...
6. To keep the imagery of a sword, perhaps we could say—the word of God draws blood from our conscience...
7. Acts 2:37—"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do..."
8. This is what's referred to as the "killing or wounding" work of the Spirit, which He always does through the word...
9. He applies the word to the heart to bring about conviction—this is intended to lead the person to Christ for healing...
10. Now—this does NOT mean, that this wounding work of the Word, always results in the person's salvation...
11. The same book of Acts provides other illustrations, wherein people are cut to the heart and respond differently...
12. Acts 7:54—"Now when they heard this, they were cut in their hearts, and began gnashing their teeth at him (5:33)..."
13. In this case, the sword of the Spirit did not cut so deep as to convert, but only stir up their native depravity...

14. For example, thing of a hunter who only wounds a bear—the wound only makes the bear more angry and dangerous...
15. So too, people often respond in a similar way to the truth—their conscience is wounded and they become angry...
16. But—nevertheless, this wounding work of the Word is necessary, both for Christians as well as non-Christians...
17. When the Spirit intends to save a sinner or sanctify a saint, He always wounds that He may heal, He kills that we might live...
18. [2] It exposes—that is, just as a sharp knife cuts a person, exposing what's inside, Scripture exposes what's in our hearts...
19. Heb.4:12-13—"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account..."
20. This passage uses the imagery of a sword cutting open joint and bone, exposing the marrow within the bone...
21. In other words—the word of God is the *exposer* of men's hearts—through His word God sees into our hearts..
22. But—through the word, our own thoughts are exposed to ourselves—we learn the true contents of our hearts...
23. For example, Scripture is elsewhere described as a mirror, in which we're able to see ourselves, as we truly are...
24. Furthermore, it's likened to a Lamp, by which we see our path, but also, into the dark corners of our hearts...
25. [3] It protects—that is, Scripture not only wounds and exposes, but it also defends from the errors and attacks of our enemy...
26. Tit.1:9—"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict..."
27. Here Paul uses the imagery of a sword—"holding fast the faithful word"—that is holding fast the sword of the Spirit...
28. One necessary qualification for an elder, is that he be a man who is trained or skilled in rightly using this sword...
29. For, he will be expected to "exhort and convict those who contradict"—that is—those who contradict the truth...
30. The word of God not only convicts, exposes, but it also protects—it is the sword of the Spirit, living and powerful...

II. How is the Word the Spirit's Sword?

1. Paul describes this sword as—"the sword of the Spirit"—it's the Spirit's sword, and that for at least five reasons...
2. [1] He is its author—by this I mean, it was the Holy Spirit of God, who uniquely inspired holy men to write it...
3. MLJ—"It is the sword of the Sprit, which means that it is He who gives it,. It comes altogether from Him. It is the Spirit who inspired the men who wrote it..."
4. Thus, here I want to briefly remind you of three facts about Scripture (all taken from this phrase 'the word of God')...
5. [a] It's divinely inspired—that is—Scripture comes from God—God, not man, is the originator of holy Scripture...
6. 2Pet.1:21—"for prophetic never came by the will of man (that is, by way of origination), but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit..."
7. [b] It's verbally inspired—it's the word of God—that is—the Spirit inspired every single word found in Scripture...

8. Jer.1:9—"I have put My words into your mouth"—that is, God gave Jeremiah the very words to speak, and eventually write...
9. [c] It's entirely inspired—it's the word of God (not the words of God)—why does Paul describe it as singular?...
10. Because, it's as if the entirety of Scripture is one word—everything within Scripture comprised God's word to man...
11. 2Tim.3:16—"All Scripture (every scripture) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."
12. [2] He is its interpreter—by this I mean, only the Spirit can enable us to rightly understand and apply Scripture...
13. 1Cor.2:12—"We have received the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things given to us by God..."
14. The Holy Spirit opens our minds and enables us to rightly and really understand Scripture—to know its meaning...
15. William Gurnall—"The Scriptures must be read, and can be understood, by the Spirit alone by whom they were made. He that made the lock can alone help us to a key that will fit the lock and open its fence..."
16. [3] He is its applicator—by this I mean, only the Holy Spirit can effectually apply Scripture to our hearts and souls...
17. 1Thess.1:5—"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction..."
18. In order for the word to be effectual, that is to effect change in our hearts, it must come in the hand of the Spirit...
19. Now—this in no way implies any fault with the word itself, but the problem lies in us, in that our hearts are hard...
20. Thus—the Spirit first changes our hearts from heart of stone to a heart of flesh, that we can feel the truth of Scripture...
21. And what the Spirit does in the beginning of our conversion, He continues to do throughout our sanctification...
22. Thus, if the word of God is to come in power, if it's going to save and sanctify, it must come backed by the Spirit...
23. William Gurnall—"Except the Spirit lays His weight on the truths we read and hear, to apply them close, and as it were cut their very image in our minds and hearts, they leave no more impression than a seal set upon a rock or stone would..."
24. [4] He is its instructor—by this I mean, only the Holy Spirit can teach a man or woman how to rightly use it...
25. The sword of the Spirit is a dangerous weapon in the hands of those who lack the Spirit as a divine instructor...
26. For example, think of a young toddler who reaches up to the counter, and takes down a large knife used by his mother...
27. A large sharp knife (I guess any kind of knife), is dangerous in the hand of a toddler, it could hurt him or others...
28. But—a knife in the hand of a grown lady who knows what she's doing, then the knife is a means of great good...
29. Well—if this is true with regards to a kitchen knife, how much more so with a sharp sword, machete, or dagger...
30. Thus—the same is true of the sword of the Spirit—in the hands of untrained people the word of God is dangerous...
31. And thus—it's only the Holy Spirit that can teach a person how to rightly handle the sword of God's holy word...
32. 2Tim.2:15—"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately (or skilfully) the word of truth..."
33. Let me illustrate further—let's say a person joins the army, and as a result he is issued an M16 machine gun...

34. The machine gun is powerful, deadly, and complicated—how dangerous would be to, to issue this rifle without instructing the soldiers...
35. Thus—the Army in addition to issuing this weapon, has a very qualified instructor to teach how to rightly use the rifle...
36. Well—this is the job of the Holy Spirit—for every Christian soldier is issued a sword, that is very powerful...
37. And it is the task of the Holy Spirit, as the divine instructor, to teach soldiers how to rightly use this weapon...
38. Think about it—how is more qualified at teaching how to use the weapon, then the very one who authored it...
39. [5] He is its glorifier—by this I mean, it is the task of the Spirit to glorify the living word through the written word...
40. Now—I totally understand Paul to mean, when He says the word of God, the written word, but there is a necessary connection between the written and living word...
41. In fact—five times the book of Revelation describes Christ as having a two-edged sword coming from His mouth (Rev.1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21)...
42. That simply underscores—the close connection between the sword of the Spirit (written word) and Christ (living word)...
43. Jn.16:14—"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you"—He communicates grace from Christ by glorifying Him through the word...
44. John Calvin—"By these words he means that we receive the Spirit in order that we may enjoy Christ's blessings....Nothing, therefore, is bestowed on us by the Spirit apart from Christ, but he takes it from Christ, that he may communicate it to us...In a word, the Spirit enriches us with no other than the riches of Christ, that he may display his glory in all things..."
45. Thus—for these reasons, the word of God is the sword of the Spirit—He is its author, interpreter, applicator, instructor, and glorifier ...

III. How is the Sword of the Spirit taken up?

A. Remain dependant upon the Spirit

1. We must always remain mindful of the necessary connection and relation that exists between the Spirit and word...
2. These two, the Holy Spirit of God and the word of God, must always be joined together as we engage the enemy...
3. Thus, throughout the history of the church two large errors have formed that deny either the Spirit or the word...
4. [1] Mysticism—this error says—because we have the Spirit of God, the word of God isn't all that important...
5. It fundamentally forgets, the Holy Spirit always and only speaks to God's NC people in and through the word...
6. Thus—in its extreme cases, mysticism seeks for God's voice from within—in some form of inner light or voice...
7. There is a sense in which, the modern-day Charismatic Movement, or Mystics, in that they tend to ignore Scripture...
8. [2] Intellectualism—this is the opposite of mysticism, and downplays the need for the Spirit to rightly know and apply Scripture...
9. This error maintains, that because we have the objective word, we have little if any need for the Spirit's work...
10. Perhaps I can put it this way—such people think that the work of the Holy Spirit ended when the Bible was completed...
11. Yes—in one very important sense the Spirit's work was completed—He no longer gives divinely inspired revelation...

12. But, dear Christians, His ongoing work of illuminating, convicting, and applying Scripture is always needed...
13. Thus—what I want to do here is—suggest a few practical helps to assist us, in remaining dependant upon the Spirit...
14. [a] Deeply feel your need for the Spirit—that is, you must be convinced that your enemies are too powerful...
15. No person will look for help from the Spirit, who things they are sufficient in themselves, we must know our weakness...
16. 2Cor.12:9—"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness...v10 For when I am weak, then I am strong..."
17. John Calvin—"We must feel our faintness and poverty, that the saying of Paul, The power of God is made perfect in our weakness may be fulfilled; for if our hearts are not deeply moved by a conviction of our weakness, we cannot receive seasonable assistance from God..."
18. Thus—before you come to the word, to handle that word—confess it's too heavy for you to lift by yourself...
19. [b] Pray for the daily help of the Spirit, Ps.119:18—"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law..."
20. We must that the Spirit of God would come and apply His powerful weight to the edge of the word of God...
21. Every time we open our Bible's we must pray—O God, may your Spirit open my eyes to the meaning of this passage...
22. O God, may your Spirit apply your word to my heart—may He make it effectual in fighting off the attacks of my enemy...
23. Eph.6:18—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"—that is by the Spirit's help and power...
24. [c] Remove anything that hinders the Spirit—we must remember brethren, the Spirit is a person not a force...
25. And as a person, the Spirit can be grieved and quenched—and the result of this would be to lesson His work in our hearts...
26. Perhaps I can illustrate it this way—to grieve the spirit would be to dull the edge of the Spirit's sword (word of God)...
27. This doesn't mean—that we weakened the Spirit Himself, nor does it mean we weaken or dull Scripture itself...
28. But it does mean—we will weaken the influence of the Spirit, and thus the power of God's word in our soul...
29. Thus, what are things that grieve the Spirit of God—undealt with and unconfessed sin—sins of the heart, tongue, and life...
30. But another common sin that grieves the Spirit is despising or ignoring the Spirit—acting like we don't need Him...
31. O my dear friends—how ashamed I am, for how often do I turn to His word without even a plea for assistance...
32. How many times have I attempted to make sense of a text or passage, with merely mental sweat and diligence...
33. How often do we turn to our commentaries and other books, before we plead to God for the help of His Spirit...

B. Hide the word in your heart for the evil day

1. Ps.119:11—"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"—notice hiding God's word is tied to not sinning against Him...
2. In other words—to hide God's word in our hearts, is a way in which we can resist the temptations of the evil one...
3. The Hebrew word rendered "hidden" literally refers to a hidden treasure—something that is considered of value...

4. And this is essential to this point—we will never hide the word of God in our hearts until we realize its impertinence...
5. My dear friends, the word of God is a treasure—it's absolutely essential, and it must be hidden in the vault of our heart...
6. I can even go further—only that heart that has this treasure hidden in it, is properly fitted for spiritual warfare...
7. And here is one primary reason we are defeated—here is one primary reason we fail to stand in the evil day...
8. We simply fail to hide God's word, the treasure of Holy Scripture, in the treasure chest of our hearts and souls...
9. Thus—by hiding the word in our hearts, I mean two things—we memorize Scripture, and we meditate on Scripture...
10. Charles Bridges—"But how is the word to gain entrance into hearts like ours? How shall it be 'hid' in so unkindly a soil? No power of man surely can plant it there. The Holy Spirit's Almighty agency must be diligently sought; for in proportion as we are filled with his gracious influence shall we be armed, as was our Master, for the effectual resistance of our spiritual temptations..."
11. [1] Memorizing Scripture—that is, you commit to memory, individual texts, or else, larger sections of Scripture...
12. Let me here make a public confession—for the first several years of our marriage, my wife and I memorized large sections of Scripture...
13. Various Palms, individual chapters, and large sections of Scripture—but it's not something we've done lately...
14. What a wonderful way to spend time with your wife—memorize the first chapter of Ephesians or Colossians...
15. [2] Meditating Scripture—that is, instead of merely memorizing Scripture, you deeply think upon Scripture...
16. Now—I've taught on this many times in the past 12 years—but dear brethren, it's necessary to repeat these things...
17. Remember, meditation isn't emptying the mind, it's filling the mind with truth, it's deep thinking on Scripture...
18. It's through meditation that the word of God is hidden in our hearts—this is how it gets from the head to the heart...
19. Thus memorization and meditation go together—merely memorizing Scripture doesn't ensure it's hidden in the heart...
20. It's possible to memorize the whole Bible and not hide it in your heart—to hide it means you understand, believe, and love it...
21. [a] Hide various texts—that is, hide all kinds or types of Scripture in your heart, warnings, commands, and promises...
22. Scripture is very diverse—there are various kinds of Scripture, and the Christian soldier needs to hide all of them...
23. Hide warnings in your heart—we've seen this throughout our study of Hebrews, warnings are very important...
24. Hide commands in your heart—that is, texts of Scripture that spell-out our responsibility to God and others...
25. Hide promises in your heart—that is, texts that describe God's promises to His people in Jesus Christ our Lord...
26. Donald Whitney—"The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit cannot give you a weapon in the midst of a temptation if He rushes to your mental arsenal, flings open the door but all He finds is John 3:16 and Genesis 1:1..."
27. [b] Hide specific texts—by this I mean, we must hide texts that are best suited to combat specific temptations...
28. Immoral thoughts, 1Cor.6:18—"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body (command)" 1Cor.6:19—"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are

- not your own (promise)" 1Cor.6:9—"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites..."
29. Fearful thoughts, Ps.46:1-2—"God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea..."
 30. Lying—Ex.20:16—"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (command)" Ps.15:1-2—"LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart..."
 31. Thus—it's the task of the Spirit to bring back to mind, the word of God that has been hidden within our hearts...
 32. This is how the Spirit puts to death the deeds of the body—the Spirit mortifies sin with and through this sword...
 33. Rom.8:13—"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live..."
 34. How does the Spirit "put to death the deeds of the body"—that is—deed or works of the flesh—with the word of God...

C. Frequent places where the word of God is wielded

1. It has always been the conviction of Protestant or Reformed Christians, to give a priority to the preached word...
2. Larger Catechism—"How is the Word made effectual to salvation? A. The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ; of conforming them to his image, and subduing them to his will; of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions; of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation..."
3. Thus, there is a very real sense in which, one primary way we take up the sword of the Spirit, is through the public ministry of that word...
4. [1] Look past the preacher to Christ Himself—by this I mean, receive the word, not from a man, but Christ...
5. Jas.1:21—"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls..."
6. Richard Steele—"In hearing God's word, let the eye be chained to the preacher with the greatest attention and reverence; as if you saw an angel in the pulpit, or Christ Himself..."
7. Thomas Boston—"Though the voice is on earth, the speaker is in heaven, and we should consider it so as to come to hear what God says to us..."
8. [2] Personally apply the word to yourself—there is a sense in which you need to expose your soul to the word...
9. This is a common temptation—we hear the word for others—we think, such and such person needs to hear that...
10. But we need to, as it were, grab the blade of the sword, and run it through our own souls, applying it to ourselves...
11. [3] Be doers and not mere hearers of the word, Jas.1:22—"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves..."
12. Remember, we don't come merely to hear and learn, but to be changed—to live more in harmony with God's law...