

“The Sword of the Spirit”
Ephesians 6:17
(Preached at Trinity, March 20, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This morning we'll look at the final piece of the Christian armor. Paul has been reminding us that the Christian life is one of intense warfare with a powerful, unseen, unrelenting enemy. We need to engage this enemy with courage and strength. But our strength is not our own.
Ephesians 6:10-11 NAS - "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might."
2. We also need strong armor that is also not our own.
Ephesians 6:11 NAS - "Put on the full armor of God"
3. Paul describes the armor in a particular order. This would have been the order in which it was put on by the soldier.
 - A. Paul describes the first piece of armor as a belt; a girdle worn around the waist. This belt was put on before anything else. It held the loose clothing in place so the warrior could march forth unhindered. Paul calls this belt truth.
 - B. The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. This was an important piece of armor covering all of the vital organs. Paul is saying that righteousness is our breastplate. This righteousness must involve our entire being. It defines us, characterizes us. It gives us confidence before God. It equips us to stand against the lies and accusations of Satan.
 - C. The third piece of armor is Gospel shoes. The soldier's shoes protected the feet and allowed the necessary mobility for war. The Gospel provides us protection, mobility, and confidence as we battle with Satan.
4. As we've seen, this armor is given in the order the soldier put it on. He first pulled his tunic up and secured it around the waist to allow for free movement. Then he covered his torso with a breastplate. This protected all of the vital organs. Then he put on his shoes in preparation for agility and movement.
5. The first three pieces of armor were objects to "put on." In other words, they were worn. The remaining objects were to be taken up—a shield, a helmet, and a sword.
 - A. Paul describes our shield - "taking up the shield of faith"
The Christian's faith is an impervious shield that is able to extinguish the fiery arrows of Satan. It enables the believer to call upon and trust in God.
 - B. Last time we directed our attention to the soldier's helmet. Paul calls this the "helmet of salvation."

- C. Paul tells us of this helmet in 1Thes.
1 Thessalonians 5:8 NAU - "But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation."
 Our helmet is an infallible hope for that which is above this world.
 Our protection against the attacks of Satan against our mind is this hope of glory – the promise that Christ is going to return and we shall be with Him
6. Our final piece of armor is not only defensive but also offensive. It is our only offensive weapon—the mighty sword of the Word of God.
 7. Paul uses the word ῥῆμα instead of the word λόγος.
 ῥῆμα has to do with the spoken word
Matthew 4:4 NAS - "But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."
Matthew 12:36 NAS - "And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment."
 8. An argument could be made for the preeminence of preaching.
Romans 10:8 NAS - "But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart "-- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,"
Rom. 10:17 NAU - "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."
 9. But ῥῆμα isn't just for preachers. ῥῆμα has to do with the skillful use of particular portions of God's Word. It is the weapon to be employed by every Christian. This was the method of Christ as He battled Satan in the wilderness. He spoke forth the Scriptures. Not every Christian is a preacher but every Christian must be a skilled swordsman with the Word of God. The idea here is that we must be skillful with particular passages used at the right time. We speak God's word to Satan. This was our Lord's method and our method.
 10. It is called the Sword of the Spirit because He is the Author of it and it is the Holy Spirit that renders it powerful.
- I. The Use of the Sword against our enemy
- A. This Sword protects us from the seducer - the teacher of lies. It protects us from heretics and false doctrine. WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?
1 Timothy 4:1 NAS - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,"
2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NAS - " For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds."
 1. False doctrine comes in many forms today—some from a twisting of Scripture, some from a disregard of scripture
 - a. Liberal theology denies the virgin birth, resurrection, Denial of miracles, Feminism\denial of male female distinctions
 - b. A perverted soteriology - The same old Pelagianism, easy believism
 - c. Antinomianism – denial of the Sabbath, tithe
 - d. Legalism - salvation by self-effort, works
 2. Can you quickly refute error with a skillfully used passage of Scripture?
 The Bible is our Authority.

3. Paul told Timothy that the true measure of truth was the Word of God.
2 Timothy 3:13-17 NAU - "But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
4. Paul always appealed to the Word of God
 - a. When defending Justification by Faith alone
Romans 4:3 NAS - "For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."
 - b. When correcting the feminism of his day Paul wrote:
1 Corinthians 14:36-38 KJV - "What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? ³⁷ If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. ³⁸ But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant."
 - c. It was Paul's only authority for teaching
Acts 17:2 NAS - "And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures"
 - d. We find the phrase "It is written" 76 times. "Thus saith the Lord" is found 415 times.
 - e. This was our Lord's method as He fought Satan in the wilderness
Matthew 4:4 NAS - "But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'"
5. This must be our appeal – The Word of God is our authority
 In 1520 Martin Luther was ordered by the Pope to recant 41 sentences from his writings as well as his famous 95 Theses. In 1521 Luther was ordered to appear before the Diet of Worms. Again he was ordered to recant. He asked for a day to consider the order—a day spent in prayer and seeking the counsel of other Godly men.
 The next day he gave his famous response:
 "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen."

- B. This Sword protects us from Satan's accusations
1. Satan has always been the accuser of God's people. We can see this clearly in the Book of Job
Job 1:8-11 NAU - "The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."
 2. Satan often comes to us with accusations. He holds our sins before us. This is easy for Satan to do for we are indeed sinners and we often fail. But he tries to convince us that we are forsaken and without hope. He crushes our assurance and diminishes our hope.
 3. This is where the Word of God is powerful. We hold forth the Gospel as the source of our comfort and Satan flees.
 Luther: "The prince of darkness grim—we tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, for lo! His doom is sure: One little word shall fell him."
 4. Satan knows the truth of Scripture. He knows it is infallible. He knows it is God's own Word and it shall not fail. But he tries to deceive us.
- C. This Sword protects us from Satan's temptations which set on fire our own lusts
1. Satan perverts the Word to cause us to falsely justify our actions - Satan said to Jesus in Matt. 4:6 - "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You'; and 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone."
 2. Satan lies and perverts the Word of God. He denies sin and deceives us into accepting it. In our generation he has simply given it another name
 - a. Drunkenness is called a disease
 - b. Covetousness is called prudence and wise planning
 - c. Lying is called exaggeration or stretching the truth
 - d. Sabbath breaking is called Christian liberty
 - e. Murder is called a choice
 - f. homosexuality is called an expression of love or an alternative lifestyle
 - g. Fornication is called sexual freedom
 3. Our word to Satan which he hates is "Thus saith the Lord."
- D. The Sword protects us from discouragement when we are attacked with persecutions and afflictions
1. The Bible teaches us they WILL come
 - a. Jesus taught it, (Jn.16:33)
John 16:33 NAS - "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

- b. Peter taught it
1 Peter 4:12 NAS - "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you."
- 2. The Bible teaches us to consider it an honor
1 Peter 4:14 NAS - "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."
Matthew 5:11-12 NAS - "Blessed are you when *men* cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. ¹² "Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."
- 3. The Bible will provide great encouragement as we face persecution or fiery trials - There are many precious promises for the afflicted saint. Have you memorized many for a sure source of peace and comfort.
Psalms 119:161 NAS - "Princes persecute me without cause, But my heart stands in awe of Thy words."

II. Preparation of the sword – a sharp sword in the hands of a skillful soldier was a fearful weapon

- A. We must know the Scriptures and be able to use them
 You hear me say this over and over but many Christians tend to dismiss this.
 - 1. Most Christians go about with broken or dull swords
Hebrews 5:13-14 NAU - "For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."
 - 2. The use of this weapon requires much training study, memorization
 - 3. Do you know which Scriptures to use at the appropriate time?
 Many quote clichés that are not found in the Bible
 "cleanliness is next to godliness"
 "spare the rod and spoil the child"
 "God helps those who help themselves"
 Most people can't find the passage even if they know it
 - 4. Do not make your own reasoning the rule by which you measure the Scriptures. "Well I think this or that"
 - a. Most people come to the Scriptures to confirm what they think they already know rather than to be taught by the Scriptures
 - b. Don't try to make the Scriptures fit your own preconceived notion of theology
- B. We must study diligently
 - 1. Go to the Book
 Too many today get their theology from the internet – it comes by way of brief articles and soundbites. The internet contains tools but should be used to help you as you study the Bible, not just a source of words about the Bible.
 - 2. The question you need to ask is, am I being grounded in the Word?

3. Compare Scripture with Scripture - Scripture harmonizes with itself - False doctrine will never coexist with the rest of Scripture
4. Consult with the faithful guides God has given to the church
Ephesians 4:12-15 NAU - "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,"
5. Do not be intimidated by a lack of education, intelligence, or natural ability It doesn't take great intelligence. This weapon is available to all who will diligently study it and obey
Psalms 119:130 NAU - "The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple."
Charles Hodge – "In opposition to all error, to all false philosophy, to all false principles of morals, to all sophistries of vice, to all suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple, and sufficient answer is the Word of God. This puts to flight all the powers of darkness."
Martin Lloyd-Jones – "Take your stand. Take up the thing that you can use, the Word of God. Here is something that is available to every one of us. And if you know this Word you will be able to answer philosophy, science, or anything that may come against you. Keep to the Word, keep to its teaching, and you will inevitably cause the enemy to flee."

Conclusion:

1. Satan attacks us in countless ways. There are several pieces of armor which shield us. We need the sword, however, to enable us not only to defend ourselves but to actually put him to flight.
2. It demands that we have the Sword, that it be sharp and ready. You must study, you must know the Word of God.
3. The only answers that will help our generation is in this Book. Not in psychology, not in human reason - Only in the Word.
 Our sword is not only defensive, it is also our powerful offensive weapon.
 The Word of God is the only means God has ordained for the salvation of the lost—to free Satan's captives from his prison. We must march forth boldly with our mighty weapon.