



The Christian Armour

The Sword Of The Spirit (message 8)

Text: Eph. 6:17 *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*.

One of the most popular military heroes of the 19th Century was Charles George Gordon. He received his first military commission in 1852, becoming a second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. After seeing military service in the Crimean War, he went to the land of China. It was while there he became ill with smallpox. Giving him time to evaluate his spiritual condition he wrote, “I am glad to say that this disease has brought me back to my Saviour, and I trust in [the] future to be a better Christian than I have been hitherto.”

Following his recovery, he helped suppress the Taiping rebellion often defeating forces outnumbering his by as much as ten to one. Returning home a conquering hero he became known as Chinese Gordon. Unlike some heroes, he did not seek the limelight. Instead, he avoiding publicity engaged during the week in Christian work and Sundays he taught Sunday School. Eventually being sent to the Sudan he was slain just before the relief of Khartoum. In memory of him a statue was erected in Trafalgar Square. There he appears as an English Staff-Officer, wearing a patrol jacket, but without belts, sword or weapon of any kind, except his famous short rattan cane. In his left hand he is firmly grasping a Bible.

In going to battle against the forces of darkness we like general Gordon need in one hand the rod of God’s grace and in the other the word of God. Indeed, instructing the Ephesians to prepare for battle Paul urged them not only to put on the breastplate of righteousness and take the shield of faith but he said in **v17** *“and (take) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. Unlike the shield the sword is not merely a defensive weapon but an offensive weapon. In other words they were not only to be defending themselves but attacking the devil. As well as being on the defensive we are to be on the offensive. Taking the battle to the very gates of hell.

1. THE MAKING OF THIS SWORD: Although equipped with a bow, spear and battle-axe yet the Roman soldier never considered himself well equipped without his sword. Attaching it to his girdle notice here concerning it that:-

a) It Is Inspired By The Spirit: Rather than being constructed out of steel we read in **v17** *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. In Bible times there were several different types of swords. As well as the broad sword there was what was called the long sword. The particular word used he refers to a shorter dagger type weapon. It was normally only between 6-18 inches in length. In referring to it here as “the sword of the Spirit” he was indicating that it came from no Roman forge. Indeed, the phrase itself suggests not only ownership but origin. It came from the Spirit of God.

The Word of God is not only the sword of the Spirit but the sayings of the Spirit. They are his very out breathings. Indeed, writing unto the Jews scattered abroad concerning the writings of the prophets Peter said **2 Peter 1:20-21** *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”*. He reminded them that while the Old Testament was written by dozens of men over thousands of years in several languages yet they were not expressing private opinions but they spake only as the were moved by the Spirit. In fact the phrase “God said.” appears 700 times in the first 5 books of the Bible. 4,000 over we read in the Old Testament in one form or another the phrase *“The word of the Lord”*.

The Scriptures not only breathe out God but they were breathed out by God. They are his very words. A young Italian girl sitting reading a little book a sceptic asked her what she was reading. Stating she was reading

the Word of God he said “who told you the Bible was the word of God”. Stating God had told her he laughed saying “impossible! You have never seen him nor talked to him. How could he tell you”. Looking up she said “who told you there is a sun in the sky”. He said “who told me? Nobody told me; I don’t need to be told. I feel its warmth and I love its light”. The young girl looking at him she said “You have put it straight. I read Gods word and I feel it warmth and I love its light”. This book does not merely contain but it is the very word of God. Every chapter, every verse, every syllable, every letter comes from him. Never forget when you read this book it is not a prophet but God speaking.



b) It Is Interpreted By The Spirit: Setting forth the word of God we read in v17 *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. Think for a moment of the locksmith. Taking his tools he setting the various levers in place he forms the lock. Finishing it who but the same locksmith can file a key that will fit its wards and open its fences. In describing the word of God as being breathed by spirit he was indicating he alone could open its seals giving understanding.

The Holy Spirit is not only the author but the expounder of the word. He alone is able reveal its gems. Indeed, speaking of this book as a ‘mystery’ Paul then going on to encourage his hearers said *1 Cor. 2:12 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”*. He reminded them that being saved they had received the holy Spirit. Being the great teacher teacher he would explaining to them the mysteries of the word. Indeed, realising this the psalmist cried out *Psalms 119:18 “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law”*.

The holy Spirit is not only the inspiring but interpreter of the Scriptures. He alone is able to unravel its mysteries and make them as simple as abc. A professor one day was in a classroom making fun of the Bible. He said, “ I’ve read the Bible and I can’t make any sense out of it. That’s why I don’t believe the Bible is the Word of God. I don’t understand it.” A Christian student unable to stand it anymore said “Well, sir, that’s what you get for reading somebody else’s mail.” The Bible is a spiritual book for a spiritual people, and in order to understand you need a spiritual helper. It is only as you yield your life to the control of the Holy Spirit that you will ever understand it. You need to read it upon your knees crying “spirit of God teach me”.

c) It Is Implemented By The Spirit: Preparing them to battle against spiritual forces he said v17 *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. While the sword today is more an ornament than a weapon it was not so in the days of the apostle. It was the equivalent of our gun. In describing the word of God as the sword of the spirit he was indicating that it was the spirit’s only weapon.

The Spirit uses not carnal but celestial weaponry. The very word of God. Indeed, forgetting this Peter and being confronted by the High Priest’s guards he unsheathed his sword. Wielding it around his head we read in *John 18:10 “Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus”*. Cutting off Malchus’ ear he only depend their rage. However, going out against the same enemies at Pentecost armed with the sword of the Spirit 3,000 were converted in one day.

The spirit uses only spiritual weaponry. He never reverts to persecution, force or any other means. Constantine forgetting this he baptised thousands at the point of a sword but while he changed their habits he never changed their hearts. This is God’s sword. It is only as we use it that we will see a real, lasting work done for time and eternity. Edward VI at his coronation being handed the swords as king of England, France and Ireland said “there is yet another sword to be delivered to me”. Asked what it was he said “the sacred Bible which is the sword of the Spirit ” Don’t be tempted to turn to other weapons.

2. THE MINISTRY OF THIS SWORD: In *Hebrews 4* the writer reminds us that as a sword it is exceedingly sharp and able to divide between the joints and marrow. Being pressed into service notice:-

a) It Is A Defensive Weapon: Describing its capabilities v17 *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. The sword is first mentioned away back in Genesis 3. There Adam

and Eve reaching out and eating the forbidden fruit the Lord drove them out of the garden. Driving them out we read *v24 “he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life”*. Their swords gleaming like the flames of fire they protected the tree of life. Turning in every direction they stopped our fallen parents plundering its fruit. As such in describing the word as a sword he was indicating that it would protect them from danger.

The Bible is not only an offensive but a defensive weapon. It blocks and breaks the Satan’s sword. Indeed, Satan coming up against the Lord in the wilderness he not only tempted him to turn the stones into bread but he then asked him to jump of the pinnacle and then to worship him. Seeing Satan’s sword we read in *Matthew 4:6 “And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone”*. Three times over we find the Lord saying “it is written”. Stretching forth the sword of the Spirit it broke hells every arrow.

The word of God not only schools us but shields. It protects from every attack. Two little orphans lying in a door way one said to the other “Man, Satan’s tempting me”. His friend turning to him he said “What are you doing about it”. He said “I tried to sing a hymn and that does not send him away”. “Weel” said the other boy “when he tries again try him wi’ a text; he canna stand that”. The devil has no answer to the word of God. It defends the heart and mind from every temptations. When it is in our heart and minds temptations will not have the same pull. Bunyan “Sin will keep you from this book of this book will keep you from sin”.

b) It Is A Deadly Weapon: *v17 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. The sword mentioned here was a short sword. As such it is consistent with the word “wrestle” in *v12*. It was used in hand to hand conflict. Being sharp and two-edged it piercing between the joints of their opponent’s armour easily disembowelled him. It brought him down.

The word of is sharper than any two-edged sword. Piercing the soul it is able to bring it down. Who were harder than the crowd who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet Peter unsheathing his sword we read in *Acts 2:37 “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*. The word “pricked” here means to pierce. His words going beyond their minds cut them right to their hearts.

The word of God is not only pure but powerful. It is able to slay the hardest heart. One of Cromwell’s knights complained that his minister was targeting him every Sunday. Calling the minister before him the minister objecting said he had done nothing but his duty and had only preached in general terms. Summoning the knight Cromwell said “Sir John, go home and hereafter live in peace with your minister; the word of the Lord is a searching word, and I am afraid it has found you out”. You say but people no longer believe the Bible and if they do not believe it what can it do. A man can say “I don’t believe is using swords in modern warfare. What can they do. Give me a gun”. He may not believe it to be any good but run it through him and it still draws blood. Men don’t have to believe this is God’s word for it to pierce their hearts.

3. THE MASTERING OF THIS SWORD: It needs to be:-

a) Accompanied By Practise: *v17 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”*. The word “word” here is not the usual one used to describe the word of God. It refers to a particular saying of God’s word. In other words they were to take particular sayings or verses to smite the devil.

As well as having the swords of the spirit we need to be swordsmen. To be able to grasp particular sayings to throw at the devil. Satan attacking the Lord he was able to throw precise verses at him.

The Scriptures are not only to be marvelled at but memorised. They need to be in our minds ready to throw at him. What good is a sword if you do not know how to use or you cannot find it. Learn it.

b) Accompanied By Prayer: *v18 “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”*. As well as having on the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of peace, girdle and helmet they were to take with this sword prayer. One was not to be used without the other.

The Scriptures and supplication ought to be inseparable twins. One is required for the other. Indeed, in *Acts 6:4* we are told the church leaders gave themselves “*continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word*”. While the word enlightens us it is prayer that enables us. You need to combine your witnessing to souls

with wrestling in supplication.

c) Accompanied By Praise: Psalm 149:6 “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand”. While the sword was to be in their hands praise was to be in their mouths.

Praise adds power to our thrust. It enables us to piece the heaviest armour. It was when the the armies of Jehoshaphat burst into praise that the Lord coming overcame their enemies. Without praise we will be without power. The hymns are not just fillers in the service. They stir the power of God brining his aid. Don't forget to praise him. Have you taken the sword of the Spirit?

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