

*“Take the helmet of salvation and the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit.”*  
*Ephesians 6:17*

**“The Sword of the Spirit”**  
Ephesians 6:17; Luke 4:1-13

- I. Armor is useless without the “sword of the Spirit,” the Bible, which is:
  - 1) A defensive weapon (4, 8, 12)
  
  
  - 2) An offensive weapon (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
  
- II. The sword of God’s Word, by the Holy Spirit’s power:
  - 1) Convicts us of our sin (Hebrews 4:12; Acts 2:37)
  
  
  - 2) Converts the most hardened of sinners (Acts 9:1-19)
  
  
  - 3) Comforts us in the troubles of life (Psalm 23; Isaiah 43:1-3; Matthew 11:28; John 14:1-6)
  
- III. Application: To effectively use the “sword of the Spirit” we must:
  - 1) Be thoroughly familiar with the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15)
  
  
  - 2) Commit key passages to memory (Psalm 119:11)
  
  
  - 3) Always be prepared to use God’s Word as the “sword of the Spirit” (13; 1 Peter 3:15)

## **“The Sword of the Spirit”**

Ephesians 6:17; Luke 4:13

Can you picture a soldier going off to war without his rifle? He has his boots, helmet, uniform, but no weapon? How foolish! In the same way, as Christian soldiers we need the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We have seen that God provides us with armor: the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with the peace of the gospel, a shield and a helmet of salvation, but how foolish and dangerous it would be to wear the armor and not pick up and use the sword! Our text, in Ephesians 6:17 says: *“Take the helmet of salvation and the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit.”*

The sword of God’s Word is double edged. One edge is for defensive use. We see our Lord’s use of the Sword of the Spirit defensively in our Scripture reading from Luke 4:1-13:

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, <sup>2</sup> where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*

<sup>3</sup> *The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”*

<sup>4</sup> *Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone.’”*

<sup>5</sup> *The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup> So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”*

<sup>8</sup> *Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”*

<sup>9</sup> *The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup> For it is written:*

*“‘He will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you carefully;  
<sup>11</sup> they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”*

<sup>12</sup> *Jesus answered, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

<sup>13</sup> *When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.*

Did you notice in verse 4, in verse 8, and in verse 12, how Jesus used an Old Testament Scripture to refute Satan, to cut defensively with the Sword of the Spirit? That is one of the important uses of the Word of God as a sword. We are to use God's Word defensively to thwart the attacks of the evil one.

The other edge is to use offensively as we attack evil, expose falsehood, and show the foolishness of human knowledge apart from the wisdom of God's Word. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 explains: *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*

As we wage war, we use the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The power of that sword is described in Hebrews 4:12 this way: *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*

### **Conviction of Sin**

The sword of God's Word, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, is potent for a number of reasons. First, it has the power to convict us of our sin. Do you remember the response of the people there at Pentecost? Acts 2 records Peter's description of how Jesus, the true Son of God, was crucified. Peter references the Old Testament Scriptures as he describes the resurrection of Jesus. And then, in Acts 2:36 he says: *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."* Then verse 37: *"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"*

The sword of the Spirit had cut into their hearts and convicted the people of their sin. The same thing happens to every true believer. One of the early church fathers, Augustine found out that out as well. He had lived a life that was anything but Christian, but was blessed by having a godly mother, Monica, who faithfully prayed for him. And she had many prayer concerns. Augustine's parents had sent him to Carthage, which was the largest city in North Africa and had some of the best schools. However, it was a secular city known for its many temptations. Augustine soon got caught up in all the temptations and begin to live a wild, immoral life for a number of years.

But gradually, over time, as his mother faithfully prayed for him, he had a change of heart. He acknowledged the truth of the Bible, but he still mixed it in with secular and philosophical ideas. And he still lived an immoral life style. In his book, *Confessions*, he admits his prayer was "O Lord, give me chastity, but not now!"

A point came in his life when he was in a friend's garden struggling in his mind with his immoral lifestyle. Knowing that it was wrong he was grieved by it. As he was thinking

about how wrong his lifestyle was, he heard a child next door sing a little song, “Take up and read. Take up and read.”

Augustine got up returned to the bench where he had been sitting, picked up a copy of Paul’s letters to the Romans and it happened to be at this passage: *“Let us behave decently as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”* (Romans 13:13–14). The Sword of the Spirit cut into Augustine. It was the turning point in his life. He went on to become one of the most influential leaders in the church.

### **Power for Conversion**

Second, as it convicts, God’s Word has power to bring change, power for conversion. No one can be converted without first being convicted. The Puritans would bring a person to a point of conviction and then back away to let the Holy Spirit work in the person’s life. They realized that if the conviction is real, conversion will follow. They were following the principle of the Apostle Paul who realized his total dependence on God’s Holy Spirit for ministry. He told the Corinthians, *“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”* (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

Nothing on earth that has changed - totally converted - more lives than the gospel message of God’s Word. Attend any Gideons’ meeting and you will hear of the transformed lives of people who in the gracious providence of God picked up a Bible, read from it, and were convicted and converted as the Holy Spirit worked through the Word in their lives.

I’m sure that many of you are familiar with the *Unshackled* program on Moody radio. The program features people whose lives have been unshackled by the convicting and converting power of the gospel, the Sword of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit still works through the Word of God to transform and change lives in wonderful and amazing ways!

### **A Sword That Can Comfort**

Third, not only does the Word of God convict and convert, the sword of God’s Word also comforts us in all the troubles of life. While the Word of God can cut deeply as the Spirit works in us, it can also comfort with complete consolation.

One of my privileges as a pastor is to be with people not only in the good times, but also in the deep waters of life. At times of sickness. And times of death. At times of personal or family crises. What a sad job this would be if it were not for the consolation of the Scriptures. Scriptures like Isaiah 43:1-2: *“But now this is what the Lord says He who created you... He who formed you.... fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and*

*when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord, your God, the holy one of Israel, your Savior.”*

Early in my ministry I received a call at the break of dawn from a woman who had been attending our church with her husband. They were older people but relatively young Christians. Her husband had died during the night in his sleep. I went to her house, and no sooner was I in the door when she said, “Would you read me that passage in the Bible about many mansions?” She wasn’t sure where to find it, but she knew in God’s Word there was comfort. What a blessing to turn to John 14 1-6 and read these words of Jesus:

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms (mansions KJV); if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”*

*Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”*

*Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

What comfort we find in the Word of God! It not only cuts, convicts and converts. This is a sword that also comforts! There is great truth in the familiar hymn written by John Burton, “*Holy Bible, Book Divine:*”

Mine to chide me when I rove;  
Mine to show a Savior’s love;  
Mine thou art to guide and guard;  
Mine to punish or reward.

Mine to comfort in distress;  
Suffering in this wilderness;  
Mine to show, by living faith,  
Man can triumph over death.

### **Knowing the Word**

We see something, then, of the power of the “*Sword of the Spirit*” - God’s Word, the Bible. But in order to effectively use the sword of God’s word we must, first, be thoroughly familiar with it. 2 Timothy 2:15 wasn’t written just for pastors when it says: “*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*”

One reason it is so important to know the Bible is because your enemy is thoroughly familiar with the Word of God, - your weapon, your sword, - and he often tries to turn your own weapon against you.

Last December we in the Chicago area were intrigued and thankful to hear of how Jason McDaniel was able to grab the gun of the so called “honey bee killer” as he and others were held hostage in an Orland Park tanning salon. McDaniel was able to grab the assailant’s gun, and he shot the man, who it turns out had committed multiple murders earlier in the year.

We are thankful that the “good guy” got the gun and saved the hostages and himself. But it doesn’t always turn out that way. Your enemy, in spiritual warfare, is thoroughly familiar with your weapon, and he often tries to turn your own weapon against you.

After all, that is what he did with Jesus. In Luke 4 we read: *“The devil led him (Jesus) to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup> For it is written:*

*“He will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you carefully;  
<sup>11</sup> they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”*

During that temptation the devil took God’s own Word, the quote from Psalm 91, and used it against Jesus.

You can be sure that he uses the Word of God against believers today, just as he did with our Lord. His knowledge of the Word of God enables him to very effectively masquerade as an angel of light. Since he knows Scripture thoroughly, how much more important for us to know Scripture! We must have a daily quiet time in God’s Word, otherwise we are as foolish as a soldier who goes into battle without his sword, without his rifle, without his ammunition.

### **Memorize the Word**

Not only must we be thoroughly familiar with God’s Word, we also must memorize key verses. When we looked at the belt of truth we saw the importance of Bible memory, and we see that here as well.

It is hidden in the text in our English Bibles, but in the original Greek language of the New Testament there are different words to describe God’s Word. There is the *logos*, the whole of God’s Word that focuses on Christ. It is the word used by John in describing Christ, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (John 1:1).

But there is also the Greek word *rhema* which is used to denote specific passages. And it is this Greek word *rhema* that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:17, when he says: *“Take the helmet of salvation and the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit.”*

What he is teaching us is that we not only need to know God’s Word as it focuses on Christ, but also that we need to know specific verses which can be used as a sword against the evil one. That’s exactly what Jesus did when Satan tempted Him, as we read in Luke 4.

Did you notice the quotes, listed on the bottom of the page on Luke 4? Three times Satan tempted Jesus. Three times Jesus used specific quotes from the Bible, the *rhema* - the sword of the Spirit, - to turn away the devil’s temptation.

Just that one verse, that one phrase, can turn the evil one away as he sees the glint of the sword of the Spirit. As the Psalmist says, *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”* (Psalm 119:11).

Your sword - your *rhema* - may be different from mine. All of us are touched differently by different verses. But when you are touched by a specific verse, - when that verse speaks to your life in a special way, write it down; commit it to memory.

### **Use the Word**

Third, be always ready to use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. We have seen where Luke 4:13 is one of the most chilling verses in the Bible. It says: *“When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Him until an opportune time.”*

Think of all the opportune times Satan had to tempt Jesus: Times of loneliness. Times when the Pharisees ridiculed and persecuted Him. Times when His disciples were so dull to the spiritual realities He was teaching them. When He came to Jerusalem to the cheers of the people, - what an opportune time for a temptation of pride! Later at Gethsemane... Before Pilate... On the trail leading to Calvary... We can be sure that the evil one capitalized on every opportunity. No wonder Hebrews 2:18 says, *“Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted He is able to help those who are being tempted.”*

In your life and in my life we can be sure that our adversary will also look for the most opportune time. Make sure that the sword of God’s word is in your hand, and those verses - the *rhema* - are in your heart.

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Can you imagine a soldier going into battle without his rifle! He would have his boots. He would have his uniform. He would have his helmet on, - but no weapon. Yet how many professing Christians go against a cruel and cunning enemy without the sword of the Spirit?

May you and I be among those who do as Ephesians 6:17 tells us to do: “*Take the helmet of salvation and the Word of God which is the sword of the Spirit.*” It is the Word of God, applied by the Holy Spirit, that gives us a sword against the many schemes of the evil one. Amen.