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Sermon Notes

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The Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17

Few things in military history have so aroused the passions and imaginations of warriors as the SWORD... a long, shiny, sharp weapon of death... the sword devours life and leaves death in its path; the technological advances of metallurgy and of the design of the perfect blade has been a big part of that imagination... the dream of a PERFECT SWORD

Throughout military history, no technology was so carefully developed and guarded as that of swordmaking... the sword was the most powerful weapon in the world before the advent of gunpowder... thus it became a symbol of military conquest

To live by the sword or to die by the sword meant to live and die by military conquest

Swords are mentioned 404 times in the Bible...

The merest mention of the word **sword** evokes images of legendary figures: English knights, Roman gladiators, Japanese Samurai, or Viking warriors.

When I was a missionary in Japan, I became fascinated by the *katana*, the legendary Samurai sword that was forged with astonishing precision by ancient technologies

When you look at the edge of an exquisitely forged Samurai blade, you can see ripples in the steel... as though there are layers upon layers of steel

And that's because that is exactly what they are... layers after layers of two different types of steel: High carbon steel, that is exceptionally hard: such steel can be honed to a microscopically razor sharp edge, able to cut through any armor it might face; the problem with the high-carbon steel is that it is also brittle... it can snap easily in battle; so the craftsmen learned to layer

the high-carbon steel with low carbon steel that was tougher, more durable... the combination of exquisite hardness honed to a razor-sharp edge with amazing toughness was achieved with these layers

sometimes the blacksmith would fold the sword's metal sixteen times and pound it down while it was red hot...

It took centuries for this art to be developed and the secrets to the manufacture of these terrifying weapons of war were closely guarded

Stories developed over time of two master craftsmen

Masamune and Muramasa... two men who actually lived at different times from each other, so the legendary contest between the two could never actually have happened. Now, Samurai sword history regards Masamune's swords as some of the most beautifully crafted Katana ever made, and his surviving swords are all priceless national treasures. By contrast, Muramasa's swords were regarded as violent, brutish and evil while the swords of Masamune were considered to be deeply spiritual, pure and benevolent. In the legend, Muramasa was Masamune's student. The student became arrogant and at some point challenged his master to see who could make the finer sword.

To test the swords, each sword was held into the current of a stream. The student Muramasa's sword was so perfectly sharp it was said to have cut a leaf in half that simply touched the blade from the current alone. But the master Masamune's sword did not cut a thing, with the leaves miraculously avoiding it at the last second, as if to show it possessed a benevolent power that would not harm anything that was innocent or undeserving - even a simple leaf...

But that is just a legend... in Ephesians 6:17 we read of a more perfect sword, sharper, more penetrating, and more spiritual... as a matter of fact, this sword is actually said to be ALIVE: Even better than the Samurai legend, this sword only ever cuts in order to heal... it cuts in order to bring life, it cuts in order to ingraft faith, it cuts in order surgically to remove the tumor of sin...

it is the word of God

Ephesians 6:17 ... take up the ... sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God...

Just as the author to the Hebrews taught us:

Hebrews 4:12-13 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. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Every time you pick up the Bible, you are holding in your hand an astonishing marvel... it is literally a miracle. Only the power of Almighty God can explain the existence and potency of the Bible

Over the centuries, God forged this sword in the furnace of human history... inspiring its authors to write perfect words that reveal the mind of God to the human race

Now in focusing on the "sword of the Spirit," I do not want to neglect the element of the "whole armor of God" we also must discuss today: the HELMET OF SALVATION... with these final two elements, we complete Paul's description of the armor that God has crafted by his sovereign power, to enable us to survive the attacks of the Evil Empire of Satan, and to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ

I. Our Spiritual Warfare: A Review

A. Our Struggle... we WRESTLE... we WAGE WAR... the Christian life is a WAR

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

1. Most Christians seem totally unaware of this warfare on a daily basis...

B. Three Commands

NOTE: a combination of OUR actions and God's... we do not do everything, and God does not do everything

1) Be strong in the Lord and in his power; 2) put on the full armor of God; 3) take your stand in the evil day, the day of battle

We began with a focus on God's power in Christ to defeat Satan

1. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power

Derive your spiritual STRENGTH in him... you can't fight alone

2. Put on the full armor of God

- a. This is a matter of full preparation for battle...
- b. The six elements of the "full armor of God" have been our focus
- c. Also it is the full armor OF GOD... crafted in the workshops of heaven
- d. BUT we have to appropriate it to ourselves
- e. The "belt of truth" is wrapped around our waist... the truth of scripture, of God in Christ reconciling the world to himself
- f. The "breastplate of righteousness" is the gift of perfect righteousness given us BY FAITH IN CHRIST...
- g. The "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace" that God is eternally at peace with us... it is STABILITY... standing FIRM in Christ; it is also MOBILITY... moving out to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth... taking the gospel out into enemy territory
- h. The "shield of faith" is the ability to see our invisible spiritual enemy and all his vicious attacks

So... we take up the FULL ARMOR OF GOD...

Two more elements today: helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit

But after we have put on or taken up each element, we have to
STAND AND FIGHT

3. Stand and fight

Ephesians 6:11-14 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.... ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist

So, now we look at the last two elements of the “full armor of God”

II. The Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation

A. Protecting the Head = the Mind

1. A Roman soldier's helmet was made of leather, strengthened by plates of metal
2. It also usually had a high plume or crest to ornament it and give it imposing dignity
3. It protected the most important part of the body: the head
4. A wound to the head, if it penetrated to the brain, was usually fatal
5. It points to the MENTAL NATURE of our spiritual warfare; so much of this is a battle for the MIND

B. A Battle for the Mind

1. The essence of Satan's attacks and Satan's power is his ability to put spiritual thoughts, words, ideas, concepts in our minds that lead away from God's path of righteousness
2. HOW YOU THINK IS HOW YOU WILL LIVE

Ephesians 4:17-18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

3. Satan has the ability to put dark thoughts in our minds, and pervert right thinking with lies and twisted angles on scripture
4. The “helmet of salvation” is a reminder to protect our minds from Satan’s lies

C. The Hope of Salvation

1 Thessalonians 5:8 But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

1. Paul changes the helmet slightly there, speaking of the “hope of salvation”
2. He goes on to point to the future based on God’s decrees in the past... God did not APPOINT US (i.e. predestine us) to suffer wrath... whatever Satan does to us will never change God’s eternal decree over us in Christ
3. It is concerning our FUTURE that the helmet of salvation is especially powerful!! Our salvation is GUARANTEED

D. Hope is POWERFUL in Spiritual Warfare

1. Satan is actively engaged in ministering HOPELESSNESS to Christians
2. This is very much to his purpose... it is VITAL for him to paralyze Christian warriors with depression, discouragement, despair
3. Since our OFFENSIVE WEAPONRY is so powerful and our DEFENSIVE ARMOR so impenetrable, all Satan can do is TRICK US into failing to take up the full armor of God and the weapons of the Kingdom... he does this by selling us a poisonous bottle of DEPRESSION... discouragement... sadness... lethargy... causing us to lay on the sidelines and GIVE UP

4. The antidote to this depression is clear... HOPE!!
5. What is CHRISTIAN HOPE? It is confidence that the future is BRIGHT based on the promises of God
 - a. WE are convinced that we will win in the end... our morale is excellent...
 - b. This HOPE OF SALVATION so fills my mind that it gives me energy to fight my own sins
 - c. I have often thought of it like a buoyant cork... first got that idea from hearing John Piper speak of William Wilberforce's 27 year fight against slavery... it was so overwhelmingly discouraging ... but he was amazingly resilient... HOPE gives you strength

E. How to Put on the Helmet of Salvation

1. Constant flow of biblical truth in your mind to combat the hopelessness and despair and wickedness of the devil's thoughts
2. Tell yourself what is true about your future

Colossians 1:27 Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Paul speaks of hope... a FUTURE EXPECTATION OF BLESSEDNESS

- a. I will most certainly be protected and shielded by God's power until I am out of this world
- b. God will not allow me to be tempted beyond what I can bear, but with every temptation he will provide a way of escape so I can bear up under it
- c. Christ will never leave me nor forsake me, but will be with me to the end
- d. All the physical and emotional trials he allows to come into my life are only for my good, for my maturity and growth in Christ;

- e. If I do sin, God will lovingly discipline me and teach me to hate that sin even more
- f. Christ is at the right hand of God and is interceding for me
- g. Nothing in the present or future world can possibly separate me from the love of God in Christ
- h. When I die, I will still be in the faith, still loving Jesus, and will be ready for heaven
- i. When I am absent from the body, I will be in the presence of the Lord
- j. When Judgment Day comes, I will not receive wrath, but will be welcomed into heaven
- k. All of my sins will be totally covered in the grace of Christ and separated from me as far as the east is from the west
- l. I will receive a resurrection body, glorious, radiant, full of life and energy and power
- m. All of the elect will most certainly survive all this spiritual warfare, and there will be a vast nation, a righteous family of believers from every ethnic group on earth
- n. The world we will live in will be radiantly glorious, glowing with the glory of God in Christ... it will be a New Heaven and New Earth
- o. I will see Christ's face as he sits on his Father's throne
- p. THESE THINGS ARE UNSHAKEABLE; there is nothing Satan can do to change any of them, because God, who cannot lie, promised them all to me in Christ... and I have trusted in him and taken those promises to myself....
- q. IN THAT WAY, we put on the helmet of the hope of salvation and we FIGHT!!

III. The Sword of the Spirit: The Word of God

Ephesians 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

A. Such a Powerful History of Famous Swords in Literature

1. Most famous, “Excalibur”... the sword in the stone... drawn by King Arthur thus winning him a Kingdom
2. Lord of the Rings had several named swords: Bilbo’s sword “Sting” which he used to kill many orcs and spiders and which Frodo and Sam used against the giant spider; Glamdring was Gandalf’s sword; and the most famous of all was *Anduril*, the sword that was reforged and given to Aragorn to fight the final battle against Sauron’s forces and win himself a kingdom
3. In the movie, “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,” the sword was called the “Green Destiny,” warrior monk Li Mu Bai’s prized weapon, which cut straight through iron rods as if they were butter
4. For me, the most moving in literature is in Pilgrim’s Progress: there we meet a powerful warrior named “Valiant-for-Truth”; a man who had long wielded the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, to win battles for the Lord. In the allegory, the time comes for him to die; he called his friends around him to hear his final speech:

“I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. **My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it.** My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who will now be my rewarder.

5. That has always been moving for me... for this warrior leaves the **WORD BEHIND** for us all to pick up... but his courage and skill with the sword must be developed and earned. You have to work for them. And whatever wounds you may receive in serving Christ will be proof that you fought his battles.

B. The Sword of the Spirit is the WORD OF GOD

1. It is a POWERFUL WEAPON in our spiritual warfare
2. It is able to CUT THROUGH all of Satan's most powerful lies and leave them broken on the ground

C. Why Called the "Sword?"

1. First, it is a powerful DEFENSIVE WEAPON against Satan's sword of LIES
 - a. Sword battles involve the clash and ring of metal upon metal
 - b. As your enemy swings his sword and seeks to bring it down upon you to wound you or kill you, you learn to fence... to fight skillfully... to BLOCK his thrusts and slashes with your own skillful swordwork
 - c. So the sword is an excellent defensive weapon against Satan's sword... but you have to know it well and wield it properly
 - d. You have to grow in your understanding of biblical doctrine, line upon line, chapter upon chapter, book upon book
 - e. You have to be able to REFUTE Satan's false arguments with specific, clear texts of scripture
 - f. This is the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT wielded in defense...
 - g. We'll see more of this in a moment
2. Secondly, it is a powerful OFFENSIVE WEAPON for the destruction of Satan's Kingdom
 - a. Many commentators have made it plain that the sword is the only offensive weapon in this whole arsenal
 - b. It has DIVINE POWER to destroy SATANIC ARGUMENTS
 - c. Satan's Kingdom is made up of souls that he keeps in CHAINS of wickedness, CHAINS of sin, CHAINS of fear of death
 - d. The Sword of the Spirit is powerful to set prisoners free
 - e. BUT it is vital that the sword be HARD and SHARP

D. Why Called the “Sword of the Spirit”?

1. The Spirit created the scripture... INSPIRATION

2 Peter 1:20-21 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness

2. The Spirit explains the scripture... ILLUMINATION

John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

3. The Spirit wields the scripture... APPLICATION

John 14:26 the Holy Spirit... will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

E. Christ as Role Model in Swordsmanship

1. Used scripture very skillfully against Satan in the desert

- a. Jesus was fasting forty days in the desert; Satan tempted him to turn the stones into bread

Matthew 4:4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

- b. Satan led him to the highest point of the temple and tempted him to throw himself down

Matthew 4:7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

- c. Finally Satan took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me.”

Matthew 4:10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

2. Lessons

- a. Expect the devil at the worst possible moment
- b. Have scripture memorized
- c. Embrace the God-centeredness of scripture... Jesus fought for the glory of God over all things
- d. Understand how to refute specific attacks with the best, most relevant scripture
- e. Don't be daunted by the fact that Satan also quotes scripture, but refute him with better verses understood more accurately

F. Characteristics of the Sword

Ten descriptions of the Word that are SWORD-LIKE: perfect...

powerful, hard, unchanging, sharp, eternal, bright, fiery, deadly, active

1. Perfect

Psalm 12:6 And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.

Metallurgy is key... blacksmiths learned to make steel with the perfect mixture of iron and carbon, so that it would be ideal for battle; God's Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is absolutely pure, free from any error or weakness

2. Powerful

Psalm 29:4-9 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon... ⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning. ⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh. ⁹ The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

3. Hard

John 10:35 the Scripture cannot be broken

In hand-to-hand combat, it is devastating if your sword breaks ... but God's word is so HARD, so UNYIELDING, it will never be broken! Satan's sword falls shattered to the ground

4. Unchanging

Luke 16:17 t is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

5. Sharp... double-edged

Hebrews 4:12 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.

6. Eternal

Matt. 24:35 Heaven & earth will pass away, my words will never pass away.

7. Bright

Lord of the Rings, "Orcs" were nearby, Frodo's sword GLOWED BRIGHTLY... God's Word SHINES radiantly in a dark world

2 Peter 1:19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, ... as to a light shining in a dark place

8. Fiery

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

9. Deadly

Isaiah 27:1 In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword, his fierce, great and powerful sword, Leviathan the gliding serpent

Revelation 19:15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

10. Living and active

Hebrews 4:12 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.

Satan's "flaming arrows" are examples of a weapon that did more and more damage after the initial wound... the fire would spread and envelop the whole person

But remember, when it comes to saving souls, the "living and active" nature of the word of God means that our human enemies remember things that were said and they **STICK WITH THEM** in their minds... they continue to divide souls and spirit... they judge their hearts and convict them, even long afterwards

Story is told of a man in England who heard a Puritan pastor preach a powerful sermon when he was a young man; this man did not repent at the time, and walked for decades as an enemy of the cross; but as an old man, he was lying under a tree and thought back to that sermon he'd heard so many years ago. The preacher had been dead for many years... but the word stayed alive in this man's mind... and he was converted by it...

LIVING AND ACTIVE

G. Practical Aspects of Wielding the Sword of the Spirit

Must develop **SKILL** in using the sword... like "Valiant-for-Truth" ... there is swordsmanship, technique...it does not come easily

Martyn Lloyd-Jones sermon: "Christians tend to be vague, generalistic, unable to cite chapter and verse... saying things like 'I think there's something in the bible about that, but I don't know where!'"

Ordination councils... rooting doctrine in specific passages of scripture rightly interpreted and applied

"What is the best scripture to support the deity of Christ?"

"What are the best verses for fighting lust?"

“What are the best verses for a healthy marriage?”

“How can we best fight spiritual depression?”

“What verses would you cite to prove that evolution is false?”

“What does the Bible say about atheism?”

“How does scripture address gay marriage?”

1. What topics is Satan likely to raise in his attacks on your soul??

a. Temptations

i) Think about a temptation to look lustfully at another person, to commit adultery in your heart

(i) When Satan attacks your soul with lust, swinging the sword of his lies, block his thrust with key scriptures that will help you

Romans 13:13-14 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

As a young, single man, working in a workplace, I wanted to have PURE EYES toward women, no matter how they dressed:

Psalm 141:8-10 But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD; in you I take refuge-- do not give me over to death. ⁹ Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, from the traps set by evildoers. ¹⁰ Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I pass by in safety.

ii) How about the temptation toward depression

Psalm 42:5-6 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

iii) Anxiety

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

iv) Covetousness

Hebrews 13:5-6 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." ⁶ So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

That is a PRIME EXAMPLE of how to wield the sword against a specific attack

b. Accusations

i) Whenever Satan accuses you of sin, use these verses:

Romans 8:33-34 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns?

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

c. Doubts

James 1:6-8 he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

d. False doctrines

Practical guidelines on developing SKILL with the SWORD:

^{KJV} 2 Timothy 2:15 Study to present yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2. Daily intake: make a regular intake of the Word of God part of your life; build up knowledge line upon line, chapter upon chapter, book upon book

3. Breadth and depth: “forest and the trees”... understanding the overarching story of the Bible, and individual verses in depth
4. Memorization: HUGELY BENEFICIAL in fighting Satan

Psalm 119:9, 11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.... ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

5. Topical study: look at specific issues in your soul... weaknesses that Satan keeps trying to exploit... and strengthen yourself with specific verses

BETHELEHEM BAPTIST CHURCH: “fighter verses”... ten sets out in the North Tower resource center

IV. Wielding the Sword Both Defensively and Offensively

- A. Internal Journey of Holiness: Blocking all of Satan’s Lies with Truth
- B. External Journey of Missions: Prisoners to be Set Free

Charles Wesley, “And Can It Be...”

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast-bound in sin and nature’s night
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light.
My chains fell off, my heart was free
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.”

Satan has his prisoners in a spiritual dungeon

We carry the sword of the Spirit into the dark dungeon with us