

Chapter 7 – The Sword of the Spirit

When we look at the sword of the spirit in Ephesians chapter 6, we discover that it's not the typical sword that comes to mind. At least not for me. My first thought would be your average 28-inch sword, but as we look a little closer at Paul's words, we see this isn't the case.

Swords come in all shapes and sizes, and the one that Paul is referring to in this context is an ancient weapon known as a machaira. A machaira is a smaller, double-edged sword that one could carry around with them at all times. In fact, the night that Jesus was arrested his followers asked Him if they should draw their swords. That's when Peter drew his machaira and cut off the ear of a soldier.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword [machaira], it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

This metaphorical sword is something we could and should be carrying with us at all times. It's the word that we hide in our heart, and the truth that cuts deeper than any sword ever could.

Thayer's Lexicon defines the word this way, "The sword with which the Spirit subdues the impulses to sin and proves its own power and efficacy."

What Paul is telling us here is to arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit. He is telling us to prepare for battle by arming ourselves with the truth of God's Word. The reason truth is so vital to our protection is that Satan is the master of deception. He comes at us with half-truths. He deceives by twisting God's Word, and he manipulates with tactics like shame, humiliation, and guilt. If we're not armed with the truth of God's Word, we're all the more likely to fall prey to his schemes.

One of the best examples of one wielding The Sword of the Spirit is found in Matthew Chapter 4 when Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, He was faced with three temptations: hunger, pride, and power. Notice how these three temptations appeal to the body, the soul, and the spirit,

Materialism – To prioritize physical comforts over spiritual values

Egoism – Putting your interests above those of others and above those of God's

Hedonism – An elevated devotion to personal pleasure

Satan attacks us by distracting our minds with the things of this world. His plan is to turn our minds away from the Lord and back onto ourselves. There isn't anything wrong with having material possessions and interests, nor is it bad to enjoy the pleasures that life has to offer. They

do become sin however when we elevate the things of this world above the wisdom of God. And that's where Satan is crafty.

He knows the scriptures and will use them to tempt us. In fact, looking back at Matthew Chapter 4, we see that Satan used scripture as a tactic to tempt Jesus. Quoting Psalm 91:11 he says, "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."

Charles Spurgeon writes, "Satan borrowed our Lord's weapon, and said, "It is written," but did not use the sword lawfully. It was not in the nature of the false fiend to quote correctly. He left out the necessary words, 'in all thy ways': thus, he made the promise say what in truth it never suggested."

Jesus was able to wield the sword, because he knew the Word of God. He rightly divided the truth in a way only those who know the Word of God can.

2 Timothy 2:15 reads, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (KJV)

When the Word of God is firmly planted in our hearts we can use it in our defence. We can discern that which is good and that which is evil. We can see the wolf coming before we're devoured.

When we study the word of God and memorize the scripture we are arming ourselves for the battle. When we truly know the scripture, we can discern when it's being manipulated or when it's being used for God's glory.

Here's an important thing to remember when it comes to your armor. A sword is useless if you don't carry it with you. If you don't study God's Word, it won't come to mind when you're in need of a sword. If you're reading the Bible and learning God's Word, you'll be easily swayed by half truths. The Bible warns us about wolves in sheep's clothing—the preachers who are more interested in their savings account than they are in saving your soul. Churches that are more concerned in filling the pews than they are with filling the kingdom of heaven. They will tickle your ears with false doctrine and lead people astray. But when you are in the Word and you know the Word, you can wisely discern right from wrong.

And finally, remember to hold that sword firmly. A sword can't be affective if you're holding it loosely. In Psalm 119 David talks about how the commandments made him wiser than his enemies, and how he was able to adhere to God's Word because he loved God's Word. He meditated on the Word that was firmly planted in his heart.

O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. (Psalm 119:97-98, NIV)

Pause and Reflect

Q. What advantage do we have when we are in the Word, and know the Word of God?

Q. What are some of the tactics the devil uses against us?

Q. What disadvantage is there to not studying God's Word regularly?

Q. How was David made wiser than his enemies?

Q. What are some examples of "wolves in sheep's clothing?"