

Weapons of War - The Word Part 2

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[0 : 00] reading of God's Word. Thank you, man. The blood will never lose its power.

I love that. Amen to that. The atonement, the redemption that Christ accomplished for us by His blood will never, His sacrifice never lose His power. He will save and save and save until the last one is saved.

Until He comes again. Oh, the blood. Thank you. Ephesians chapter 6, once again, we're looking at verse, the second half of verse 17, the sword of the Spirit.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord, our God, thank you that the blood of your Son, the sacrifice of your Son accomplishes all that you plan for it to accomplish.

not one drop of His blood is wasted. He saves those whom you have determined, whom you have chosen, Father, before the foundation of the earth, and Christ died for them.

[1 : 10] His blood was shed for them. A number of people we cannot even number throughout the ages. each one comes and will come because you will draw them.

You will open their eyes even as you've opened ours. And that blood will never lose its power in our lives. Thank you, Lord. Father, may you look upon us now as we come to your word.

As we come, we come acknowledging we are in a fight. We are in a battle. And we have no strength save in you. So we have come to ask, oh, Lord, that you continue to make us strong in your Son, in Jesus, the Lord of glory.

Make us strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. And that we would stand against the forces of darkness, that we will not run, we will not give in, but that we will stand. Father, we're in a fight. Some of us right now are fighting real strong spiritual battles right now. And some are maybe thinking about just chucking the towel in. But Father, will you send your spirit and word this morning to help them to stand, to help them to know that they have the weaponry to do battle against the forces of darkness in their home, in their school, in their work, wherever they are, they have what they need in Jesus to stand.

[2 : 37] So Father, encourage them today and rebuke the devil. put them to flight. Help us to resist him that he might flee from us.

So Father, bless your word now. May the sword of the Spirit go forth and may it pierce us all. And may we take up that sword to do battle. Bless your unworthy servant.

May he have grace to wield your sword well today. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Ephesians chapter 6. And once again, I'm reading at verse 14.

Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

[3 : 46] Amen. That is the word of God. You may be seated. Thank you once again. Praise the team. Beautiful music.

Our theme for Black History Month from our committee is hope. Hope. Hope is faith. Looking towards a better future.

Faith. Looking towards a better future. A certain future. That's one thing about Christian hope. It's a certain future.

As Christians, our hope is grounded in the reality of the kingdom of God. Christ, the king, is revealing his kingdom now.

And so, we expect to be used by him to see good things happen in our lives, in our families, and in our communities as we see his people get involved.

[4 : 53] Can I say that last part again? As we see his people get involved. You see, God didn't save you and put you where you are just so you could have a wonderful life in a picket fence.

And maybe you're in a place where you don't have a picket fence. You're just glad you don't even have a fence. And you say, why did God put me here? Can I just tell you three words?

For his glory. that's why you are where you are. Not so you could just be, put your feet back and like the fool member who he got wealthy and his barns were overflowing.

He built bigger barns to house all his wonderful glorious treasure. And he said, oh, kick back soul. Be at peace. It's all good.

Live the good life. And God said, tonight your life will be required of you, you fool. So don't be, we're not him. We're not to be him. We are called to fight.

[6 : 04] And that means we're going to do battle where we are in Jesus' name. Wherever you live, wherever you work, wherever you go to school, that is God's kingdom for you to engage.

God's kingdom for you to live. This means, according to our mission statement, that we allow God to use us as his instruments of grace, justice, and mercy.

Family, we can see people saved. That was two amens and a head nod. Don't y'all, don't y'all long, don't you, doesn't that grab you?

to see people saved, to see the lights go on, and they realize Jesus is real, and they come running, and you're right there, like a spiritual midwife, catching a baby.

Don't you yearn for that? We can see that. We can bring support to the poor and broken in Chattanooga, in our communities.

[7 : 16] cities. We can engage even City Hall about making sure affordable housing is being built so that the poor in our city are not continually being pushed around and pushed out.

Now, I know what you're thinking. You bought one of those homes that they got pushed out of. I know. But you're not there just for you. kingdom.

Christ is in you, right? He wants to use you there. We can go into public schools to tutor kids and support our public school teachers.

Yes, we can. I thought we were instruments of grace, justice, and mercy. we can see our own Glenwood school give a new generation the opportunity to be grounded in a private Christian education from a biblical perspective.

Kids who could not afford it and kids who can come together. Wow. Wow. we can even deal with our own fears because we are a fearful people.

[8 : 41] We can, all of this and more can happen as we take his word seriously, prayerfully, applying it and allowing his word to change us so that we are empowered by his spirit and wisdom as we engage the forces of darkness in Jesus' name.

That's why you're still here. It's glorious and at times it's painful. But are you using the sword of the spirit or the club of human wisdom in your day-to-day battle?

You're using something. You are doing battle against the forces of darkness using something. What is it?

Are you taking the sword of the spirit which is the word of God or are you settling for the club of popular psychology, popular opinion, popular spirituality, your own smarts, family wisdom?

Hear the prophet. The arm of flesh will fail you. Yes, yes, yes. But the word of the Lord lasts forever.

[10 : 25] Pick up the sword of the spirit saints. Let's talk some more about it. Let's go into battle.

Remember last time as we began looking at this idea, and again, these are topical sermons, I don't apologize for that, so that means I'm going to be looking at theme and taking that theme into other passages.

So that's what I've been doing as we look at each piece of the armor. I call it expository topical, because I'm following through the text.

Now, last time we looked at how the spirit creates the sword, as it were, and wields the sword, and we talked about even how to apply that, really, in our own daily lives through our devotions, right?

Talked about that. You know, funny thing about that, I've had people come up to me and thank me, because they've never been taught how to have devotions. It's amazing. As a church, we've got to make sure we're teaching our people how to have devotions, how to spend time in the word and spirit and feed their own soul, amen?

Teach your parents, teach your children. Show them how to do that. It's beautiful. Now, I've got a question I'm going to pop out. This is a quick question and we're going to move right on.

[11:44] How does the sword of the spirit differ from the belt of truth? Right? Remember he talks about taking the belt of truth? And now we're talking about the sword of the spirit. Don't they kind of sound like the same thing?

And they certainly are word related, right? They both involve the word, yes. But I think the best way to see the difference is in precision. The belt of truth refer to truth in general as revealed by the word of God.

God. It's the big picture of reality. Does God exist? Is God real? Who are we?

You know, big picture reality stuff. But when we come to the sword of the spirit, we come to precision. The word here, the sword, is used to hone in on specific situations in our lives, specific battles with the forces of evil.

It is key, actually, in the precision process of God making you alive, making people alive in Christ, making them born again.

[12:54] That's a precision attack, as it were. Well, 1 Peter 1, 23. Since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God.

There you see, as it were, the sword of the spirit coming in a precision manner to make us alive in Christ. We'll come back to this thought a little bit later in a few minutes.

The spirit, according to John 3, regenerates, makes us spiritually alive to God. You must be born again, right? But the spirit works through the word to accomplish this.

This is why it is so important when we are doing evangelism that we share the word of God, the word of the gospel with people. Let God do the heavy lifting.

Now, it doesn't mean you don't present arguments and reasoning. You see Paul doing that in Acts. Yes, it doesn't mean we don't use apologetics. We give a reason for our hope that we have.

[14:03] Peter talks about that. Yes, we do all of that, but understand it is the sword of the spirit that will pierce someone's soul and create life.

In understanding how the word functions as a sword, theologian Clinton Arnold is helpful here. He says, it is the proclamation of the gospel empowered by the dynamic activity of the Holy Spirit.

It is also the relevant application of scripture to every situation of testing or temptation. Very good.

Thank you, Brother Arnold. I call the word the scapel that the spirit uses to perform heart surgery on human beings.

Now, I want to look at a passage with you for a little bit because this really comes out so beautifully in Hebrews chapter 4, 12 and 13.

[15:09] So we're going to spend a few minutes here. Hebrews 12, 4 through 13. And here's what it says. Should be on the screen. Yeah. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

First of all, this is a book of Hebrews, right? The writer is writing to Jewish Christians who are beginning to experience some type of persecution.

They're being told you must come back to Moses. You must reject that Jesus stuff. He's not our Messiah. Our Messiah will never be crucified.

We do not accept him as the Messiah. And this community of believers is being encroached upon by their neighbors to turn back to Judaism. That's what's happening here throughout this book.

[16:26] book. And the writer writes to them to encourage them to stand firm, to stand, okay? Spiritual warfare. Now, Hebrews 10 suggests that they were being publicly mocked, they were being imprisoned, and they had their property taken away from them.

You see that in Hebrews 10, 32 to 34. So this is the kind of persecution this group of believers are undergoing. what do they need to hear from God?

When someone is threatening to take your property and leave you maybe homeless, if someone is mocking you in the public square, making your ideas look stupid, if someone is saying, you're going to prison, Crutch, for believing in this Jesus, we're going to take you and Donna away.

What do you need to hear? Above this text, he warns them not to disobey God's word.

Now, that's deep because that's not what you would have said, is it? Not what I would have thought. I mean, come on, really? That's what you want to tell them? Don't disobey God?

[17:58] Yep. Right above the text, he's warning them, he's reminding them of the Jews of the old covenant. He's reminding them that they were disobedient to God.

If you go back to verse 7, today, saying through David, he's quoting the Psalms, and today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. He's saying that these people did not enter the rest that is Canaan, the promised land.

They didn't enter his rest. Remember, that whole generation died out. He said, and God said, you're not going to enter my rest, and David is reminding them that they didn't enter because they refused to listen to his word.

Heard his voice, his word. They harden their heart. He even says, and verse 8, that Joshua didn't really give them the rest that God really intended for them.

God was giving a deeper rest, a true Sabbath rest, where we would rest from our labors. We would rest in Christ. See, we have a greater rest than they did in the old covenant.

[19:13] It was only a picture of the rest to come. The Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath, is a picture of the rest that we have in Jesus. That's what Hebrews is showing us.

So then, down in verse 11, he warns, let us therefore strive to enter that rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

That's verse 11. That comes before verse 12. And verse 12 is just on your screen. So, listen, he says all of this, and then he says, listen, do you follow what's happening?

Don't disobey God's word. He has a rest for you in Christ. Don't disobey his word. And what about that word? Why should we disobey it?

For the word of God is living and active, sharper. You see? What do you need to hear when you're being tempted to give up?

[20:19] When you're thinking I should turn back from following Jesus in this particular direction? Or even worse, I'm being tempted to fall back from Jesus, period.

The culture is crushing in on me, and I'm saying, you know something? Those folk got a point. Those Christians, you know, they're a bunch of hypocrites, and I haven't, you know, I don't have any friends at church, and, and, you know, I was there, and, and, and, and nobody said hello to me, and, and, and, and look at that pastor in the newspaper, remember that church in Chattanooga, that pastor had an affair, and see these, those pastors are hypocrites, God, the, the pew people are hypocrites, we can't, and you start listening to that rhetoric?

Now don't get me wrong, God's people are messed up, but we're being beautified. Hello? Hello? We are not what we will be, but we're just coming now, we're, we're being transformed, we're not what we used to be, nor are we, are we what we will be, but we're on the way.

So, so, so, so, so don't, don't listen, don't get all wigged out because Christians get, Christians sin. So do you. It always amazes me, and people will talk about the church as if they're not part of the problem, I don't understand that.

I'm part of the problem. I want to do better. I'm asking God to do a work in me so he can use me in a better way. Aren't you? So he warns them, so he says, listen, come to the word, listen to the word, don't give up on the word.

[22:02] Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Neither the Judaism of that day or any work-based religion can give you rest.

If you're trying to work your way into God's good graces, if you think by your works you will get blessing necessarily, if you think you're earning God's blessing by your works, you are in a works-based religion and you will not find rest.

You will find, you'll keep working, you will wear yourself out. I'm not saying works don't matter. I'm just saying they don't earn you anything.

But the gospel of Jesus can give us rest, he says, and this is God's word. Then he describes that word. Look how he describes the word. As living and active.

Oh man. Living and active. The word of God, the sword of the spirit, which he calls the double-edged sword, is not a dead word.

[23:13] Not a dead letter. Listen, you can read Socrates and Aristotle and all their works, you can read all that stuff. That's all dead.

Reading historical documents and they're all, I mean they may be true, some of them may be true, but they're still dead. This book is alive.

It's active. It's moving. It's doing stuff. It's the work of God, the Holy Spirit, who is eternally living and active.

This makes God's word the sharpest sword or instrument in existence. It is the most powerful weapon ever.

It is so sharp, the writer says, it can divide the immaterial parts of a human being, soul and spirit. It's so sharp, it can divide that which can't be divided.

[24 : 14] It can divide the inner parts of our bodies, the joints and the marrow. Now listen, he isn't trying to make a study of physiology.

So don't try to, you know, dig, pull us apart and find out that we got three parts, four parts, whatever to us. He's not trying to do that. He's making a point.

Phil Hughes is very helpful here, but he's making a point by using graphic terms about how penetrating the word of God is. The word of God penetrates into the innermost of your personality. It can do what laser surgery can't do. It goes down past the flesh into the very soul in your spirit and does surgery there.

Nothing like it. As a double-edged sword, it means it cuts both ways. It cuts coming and going. It's all cutting edge.

[25 : 19] It's super sharp. It never needs sharpening. Therefore, it never gets dull. It cuts in two ways.

I already mentioned one. Let me come back to it. It cuts in two ways. It cuts in saving and giving life. It also cuts in judgment. Are you with me?

John 6, 63. This won't be on the screen, so listen. John 6, 63. I preached through this. It is the spirit, Jesus said, who gives life. The flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

The words are spirit and life. I already shared with you, 1 Peter. Now, how about judgment? John 12, 48. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. Look at what Jesus says about his words. They either give life or they bring judgment.

[26 : 31] That's the sword of the spirit. Either you are being made alive by Christ's word and growing and your practical knowledge of him or you are being judged by that same word, which means you are uncomfortable and you are even running from God.

How many people have been raised in church, taught the mysteries of the faith, maybe even partaken of the sacraments, baptized, catechized, catechized, sanitized.

And yet, they've grown up and now if you mention the name of Jesus or the Bible of the church in their presence, they will pitch a hissy that will just, I mean, make your hair curl.

almost snarling at the very thought. This is so because notice the word can get into our minds and reveal our thoughts and intentions.

Am I making that up? Did you see that? You know, that's what it does. The word gets in your mind. It's discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[28 : 06] The word discerning means to be critical or to judge. The word gets into that which you don't want anyone else to know or that no one else just happens to know.

I mean, you may not try to hide anything, but you just, only you know. It's what you think, what you feel, what you really believe deep down inside. And he's saying this sword of the spirit, it penetrates down into there where you live.

And though you may look good, you may even be attending church, but the word of God will find you and say, hold it! And what you really think about what you're hearing, seeing, believing, or doing becomes evident.

And sometimes it's an uncomfortable thing and we want to run because, let's be honest, if we could read each other's minds, I wouldn't have anybody to preach to.

People would call me pastor, forget that. My dog would bite me. He loves me at the moment. I mean, it's amazing what the word reveals.

[29 : 29] That's why people run because what happens is the word begins to reveal and it makes them feel uncomfortable. It's the word of God that's judging them.

You don't have to say a word. One theologian, remember R.C. Sproul, who went to be with glory, now he and my pastor were best friends. Man, miss that guy, but he told the story when he was playing golf.

I played disc golf, which is a better game, but anyway, he's playing golf and he happened to be watching this guy. They were playing with Billy Graham. Billy Graham was playing on the course and a friend of his was playing with Billy Graham and the guy came back into the clubhouse, threw his clubs on the ground and he's using foul language.

I mean, he's really upset. And he said, what's the matter? He said, that Billy Graham always shoving religion down your throat, shoving the Bible down your throat. And R.C. says, oh man, sorry, sorry, I'm so sorry.

Billy came on kind of strong, huh? And the guy stopped and said, no, I just had a bad game. Billy didn't say a word to him, but who he stood for reminded him of the truth of the gospel, probably stuff he heard in Sunday school, stuff he went to church and heard before and he realized his life was not lining up with that and Billy Graham represented holiness to him.

[30 : 58] Sometimes you ain't got to say a word but the spirit of God is at work and taking that word which you have heard or which someone has heard and brings it, boop, touch that thought, those intentions.

You know, I'm so mad that the word of God judges my intentions. Because I, you know, because when I do the right thing I want to pat myself on the back.

I did, Jim, JC, I did the right thing, man. I did. And then the word of God comes and says, but why did you do it? That's good, y'all.

How do you respond to the word of God? I mean, how do you respond? Well, I'm going to break in a second. How do you respond to the word of God? How you respond will tell you if you're truly alive to God through faith in Jesus or whether you're still dead in your sins.

How do you, in general, respond to the word of God? In general. Because we all have our moments when we hear the word and we want to run. We all have our moments like that. Christian, come on, come on, Jonas.

[32 : 10] Where my Jonas at? We all have a moment. Jonah was a prophet of God. He was a believer, okay? He ran because he knew God would have mercy on them folk. And he was a racist.

He didn't want them, those people, to get saved. Those Ninevites. They weren't Jews. Weren't like us. Matter of fact, he had another reason.

They oppressed us. God, you can't save them folk. So, Jonah ran. So, we got Jonas. We have a moment. We all have our moments when we hear the word and we want to chuck it.

But I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about in general. What's your in general life response to the word of God? That will tell you where you are. Do you find a way to criticize the word or criticize Christians or in an attempt to minimize your sense of guilt or shame?

Now, I'm not just, now I'm going to come back to us. That guilt, let's talk about you a believer. And I know many counselors are saying and some even Christian ones are telling you that guilt and shame are either bad or at least very dangerous.

[33 : 29] You may even hear people say Christians should not feel guilt and shame. And I will tell you that they are dangerous if not brought to the cross of Jesus for cleansing, forgiving grace.

If you don't bring your guilt and shame to the cross for Jesus' cleansing, forgiving, loving, accepting grace, that means you're confessing, by the way, admitting that you are wrong.

And if you don't do that, then guilt and shame will eat you alive. It will eat you for lunch. But there's something more dangerous. Something even somewhat worse, I think.

God is speaking to his disobedient people who rejected his word through the prophet Jeremiah.

This is, I'm going to read it to you, so this won't be on the screen either. Jeremiah 6, 15.

He says, were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed. They did not know how to blush.

[34 : 51] Therefore, they shall fall among those who fall. At the time that I punished them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord. there's something worse than experiencing guilt or shame.

It's not experiencing it. Not experiencing it. When we reject God's word long enough, our hearts can become so hard that we don't feel guilt or shame anymore.

That's the worst condition. You see, guilt and shame say you still have a working conscience. And you, and listen, saints, you want that conscience to be sensitive to God's sword, to God's word.

If you feel shame and guilt when God's word confronts you, that is good. now, come to Jesus and let him heal you.

Don't live in it. Don't stay in there because it will eat you alive. It will crush you. But bring your guilt, bring your shame to the cross.

[36 : 04] God says, if you don't know how to blush, if you don't know how to feel shame, you'll be destroyed. That's not good psychology, I'm telling you.

But that's good Bible, which is better than good psychology. It's the best. God knows you better than, he knows us better than anybody knows us.

We need this. We call it conviction. Conviction of sin. And the word of God, the sword of the spirit, comes to convict.

We're going to stop here on conviction. Because the good news, once again, is that Jesus died.

Remember what the armor is. The armor is the work of Christ for you. So even if you are convicted by the sword, you still have the breastplate of righteousness.

[37 : 07] You come to God, you say, Lord, forgive me for my sins, but I stand complete in Christ. I stand before you, clothed in his righteousness, not my own.

Forgive me. You have both feet, you have the gospel of peace on your feet to give you stability. So when you experience that guilt or shame, as the word pierces you, we're the only army whose weapon pierces us.

And it's good. But you have the gospel of peace, and when the word finds you, you say, oh, you run back to Jesus, and you run back to saying, Lord, I know you're not angry with me, because I have peace with God through my Lord Jesus Christ.

I have peace with you. You have disciplined me as a son, as a daughter, not as an enemy. Oh, the armor of God.

Don't try to hide from God. Don't try to hide from his word. Run to him. Prodigal, run home.

[38 : 29] You slipped and she fell. Run to him. him. Run to him. The word has found you in any way.

It's okay. Feel the pain and run to Jesus. We're not done. We got ways to go. We'll come back. But I'm struck by the fact that we're celebrating Valentine's Day, and I'm preaching at Covenant College tomorrow.

Good grief, totally forgot. Don't know what I'm going to preach. Pray for me. But I remember that, you know, what's the image of Valentine's Day that's very popular, right?

The little baby with the wings and the bow and arrow. We call him Cupid. What does Cupid do? He shoots arrows that pierce our hearts so that we fall in love.

love. I got no Cupid for you, but I do have the word of God. Let the word of God pierce your heart, and you will fall more in love with God, more in love with your neighbor, and more in love with caring for people in the name of Jesus.

[39 : 49] Let the word of God pierce your heart, and he'll have you praying for your enemies. Let the word of God pierce your heart, and he'll open up a whole new world of love, of living in love, of walking in love that you've never seen before.

Father, in Jesus' name, help us to walk in love, but help us to walk according to your word. Lord, some of us have been pierced by the word on numerous occasions, and we've run away.

Oh, Lord, help us to stop running. Help us to hear you, and help us, Lord, to submit to you. Help us to obey you.

We have so little strength, Father, but by your grace, help us to grow in obedience to you, and according to your word. May we not be afraid of obedience. May we long for it, because you've saved us to obey you.

We've already rebelled. You've saved us that we can follow now. So help us to follow. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Thank you.