

Weapons of War - The Word Part 1

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Date: 06 February 2022

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[0 : 0 0] We turn again to Ephesians 6 as we continue to study the spiritual war that we have been called to as believers in Jesus.

And we're looking at the armor of God in that study. So Ephesians chapter 6, verses, we're going to read from verses 14 through 17.

The last part of 17 is our passage. Let's pray first. Father, thank you. Thank you for the spirit of God who is with us now and even now instructing and guiding and touching our hearts and lives.

Father, as we come to your word now, we recognize that you have called us to be strong in you and in your strength, not in our own strength, but in your strength.

And you have provided for us what you call the armor of God. You've given us your armor that we may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. We have what we need to stand against the enemy.

[1 : 0 9] Father, help us to trust your armor. Help us to trust you. Help us to take seriously what you have said in this wonderful passage, that you have given us what we need to, the truth that we need, the righteousness that we need, the peace that we need.

You've given us the faith that we need. All of this provided for us here in this passage in the reality of your armor, which is Christ's work on our behalf.

Father, we confess that sometimes we don't stand, we don't depend on your armor because we have been deluded by the world. We tend to think these people are smarter than you.

We tend to think we're smarter than you. And so we stand and then we fall. Pick us up today, Father. Pick us up and help us to stand now, to stand even now today, wielding the sword of the Spirit.

Help us to do battle for the souls of men and women, boys and girls, even for our own soul. Help us to do battle, not for our glory, but for the glory and the majesty of Jesus who has won the war for us.

[2 : 3 4] And now we stand by trusting in his victory. So help us today. Speak to your unworthy servant. Help your people. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth and 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.

That is the word of the Lord. Thank you, God. Please be seated. And thank you, praise team. That was beautiful.

Thank you for helping us worship the living God. Thank you. As we move into Black History Month, we have to acknowledge that the fight against racism is a fight against the spiritual forces of darkness.

[3 : 48] This is a spiritual war. Slavery, Jim Crow, which both are forms of obvious systemic racism, were demonic in nature.

When the Civil Rights Act was signed in 1964, God was blessing our nation. And we have to admit and rejoice that great changes have taken place.

But laws don't change hearts. As Christians, we know that God's law, God's law now, was not designed to change our hearts, but reveal our sins.

If that is true of God's law, therefore, we have to know that no human-made law, like the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, can change our hearts either.

Isn't that logical? If God's law didn't change your heart, but revealed your sin, then any law we made in this nation concerning this issue of racism didn't change anybody's heart either.

[5 : 10] What we've had to do is modify our behavior a bit, but for some, maybe even for a lot, but for some, not everybody, but for some, their hearts are still the same.

And what is in our hearts will be revealed. Jesus said, out of the bumpness of the heart, the mouth speaks. Whatever is in our hearts will come out.

58 years, which is my age in a couple months, is not a very long time to see change. That's how long it's been since the Civil Rights Act was signed, the year of my birth.

It's not a very long time. People living then as adults, young adults, and those born around that time under Jim Crow are still alive.

It's just true. Systemic racism has been outlawed, but the heart is not affected, which means our systems are still being affected, but in a more clandestine way because it's illegal.

[6 : 39] But laws don't change hearts. Hmm. Our hope, therefore, must not be in laws.

Our hope as Christians must always be in the power of the gospel of Jesus to deal with sin in the hearts of people, whether it's racism or bitterness, lust, whatever it is.

We have to trust in the gospel. It is only the hope found in the gospel of Jesus that can give us victory over the evil forces over, that have divided our nation to this day, our nation, and sadly, even some of our churches.

so what do we do? We must bring the sword of the spirit to bear on all areas, all areas that inhibit the revealing of the kingdom of God.

We've got to wield the sword, saints. Not critical race theory. It exists and people, but that's not our weapon.

[7 : 58] Our weapon is the word of God. We've got to wield the sword of the spirit. Against all manners of sin, addictions, et cetera, all manner of things that inhibit people, that keep us from being what God would have us to be, we've got to wield the word of God.

So I've got to ask you a question. How good of a swordsman are you? Do you know how to wield the sword?

of the spirit? Well, we've been looking at this great armor and once again Paul is drawing on in particular, he's looking at God and God's armor we saw in Isaiah, but also the Roman soldiers' armor.

Now let's talk about the Roman soldiers' armor here. See, after the soldiers in the front, when the Roman soldiers went out to fight, the front line soldiers were hurled their lances and pull out their heavy pikes and to attack people from a little bit of a distance, but when they got close, when they got really close to the enemy, those things were impractical.

They had to pull out their sharp sword. 20 to 24 inches maybe, if you're centimeters, 50 to 60 centimeters long.

[9 : 24] It was for close combat, really close personal combat. He could use this sword offensively, of course, but he could use this sword defensively too.

In defense, he would use this sword to parry or block an enemy's attack and from that position of blocking, he could go into a counterattack called a riposte.

Black boom, black stab. And that's what this short sword that was very sturdy, sharp on both sides, was good for.

Very brutal warfare. We glorify it on TV and whatnot and, you know, Robin Hood with his sword and, you know, but Gladiator, the movie Gladiator showed us some real ugly stuff there.

It's brutal. Sweating and straining and fighting and that's the picture Paul wants us to have of the spiritual conflict. It's brutal.

[10 : 31] It's painful. You're sweating. You're straining against the enemy of your soul every single day. You might not, some days it might be easier.

God is gracious. Some days it's easier but some days you are, it's like you are fighting the devil. You got, you got one arm around his neck, he got one arm around yours and you are doing your best to deal with it.

It feels like that sometimes. Remember the stony road that we tried. painful.

But Jesus has given us his armor and his weaponry that we might know his victory. So the first thing I want you to notice here is that the word of God is the spirit's sword.

The sword in this passage is the only clearly stated offensive weapon. everything, every piece of the armor that Paul has spoken about are all quote unquote in the human realm defensive.

[11 : 41] In the spiritual realm we recognize that they are still offensive as well as defensive too. But notice he only speaks of one definitely, obviously, offensive weapon.

doesn't talk about the bow, doesn't talk about the lance. He saves one, he saves this one offensive weapon for the word of God.

The sword of the spirit. But when Paul wanted to speak about this and turn to the word of God, he wants us to know that everything we know about God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and how to please him, remember, comes from this sword.

Everything we know about God comes from the word of God. Everything we know that's definite. We can see creation, amen, but creation is not specific.

It testifies that there's something above and beyond us that exists, that there is a creator. If you study creation, you get the idea that this did not happen by accident, but it's only when you come to the word of God that you get specifics.

[13 : 06] Everything we know about God, we truly find that's most important to us, we find in the word, which Paul refers to as a sword. Paul Tripp in his wonderful book Do You Believe?

says, the existence, inspiration, authority, and trustworthiness of scripture is a doctrinal foundation upon which every other doctrine stands.

No other tool is more central to God's work of redemptive rescue than the word of God empowered by the spirit of God. Every doctrine is more clearly taught in the word.

We cannot afford not to be experts at handling this sword. When I was in college, I had the chance to fence, not sell stolen goods.

Just so you know. I had new people. I knew people. But no, I took a fencing PE course. And it was so much fun.

[14 : 17] It gave us foils, man. And we're out there on the strip. And we're going back and forth. We're learning the footwork. Yeah, man. I felt like a swashbuckler. It was so cool. I also took archery.

So I was really living a Robin Hood dream. I went to class. I did go to class and I got a degree, just so you know. but it was so important that when we learned to use this, that they taught us carefully how to use it.

So much is about using the tip and your wrist and having good footwork. She taught us, my instructor was a dear lady and a dear friend of hers, they taught us how to become adept with that sword.

It was, matter of fact, I won a tournament because of it in front of my girlfriend, Sandy. We had to be good.

It was a class, it was fun. I wasn't worried about being an expert, but when it comes to the word of God, we should all strive and ask God to help us to be maybe not professional theologians, but we should be very good at handling this wonderful sword.

[15 : 38] You see, too many believers are like David in 1 Samuel 17:39. You remember this passage, when he was about to go out and face Goliath, Saul offered him his armor.

Do you remember? Saul said, well, if you're going to go fight him, take the good stuff, right? So he was going to offer him, Saul had the best armor in the kingdom, the best armor, the strongest armor, and probably ornate as well.

And so he puts it on David, and David's, you know, he's like, this don't feel right. I don't know how small or tall David was, but Saul was taller than everybody.

So you know that armor didn't fit David quite right. It was really too big. It had to be too big for him. And so David says, you know, oh, king, he's being polite, I'm sure, you know, thank you, old king, but he said, I can't wear this because I haven't tested them.

I can't wear your armor because it's not, I haven't proved it, I haven't practiced in it, and it's too big, man. I mean, I'm just saying.

[16 : 51] Listen, because he hadn't practiced with that armor, just say it did fit, but because he hadn't practiced with it, he didn't know what it could take. You know, he didn't know if he could take a, you know, if that breast was going to really work for him.

He didn't know, he didn't know how to, that sword, was that handle going to fit his hand well? Was he going to be the, he didn't know. He had, and so he was right, he was very smart and very wise. He said, no, thank you, I'll get my own stuff.

And of course you know what happened. Listen, saints, too many of us are like David. We haven't tested God's armor.

In particular, we haven't tested the sword enough to be adept with it. We're not good swordsmen because we haven't put the sword to practice, we haven't been on the, in the practice field as it were.

So, well, how do we do that then? How do we practice with the sword of the spirit, the word of God, so that when the day of evil comes and the enemy comes at us, we know how to parry and riposte?

[18 : 05] How do we do it? Okay, thank you for asking that question. It's called daily devotions.

I know, I know what you're thinking, but stay with me for a minute. How do you have daily devotions? How do we do that?

Can I just walk you through just for a second? First, you pray. You begin your devotions by praying, asking God to show you him, show you his glory and character as you open the Bible.

You know what I saying? We, see, we want to know Jesus better. When we come out of the Bible, we want to actually know God better. So we ask God for understanding and insight because it's his book.

He's the author and nobody understands it better than him. So we begin with prayer along these lines. Amen? Okay, let's keep going. Now, it's a good thing to read through books of the Bible in your Bible reading.

[19 : 18] You see, so many times we use devotional books, which are very good, very helpful. I got one myself. I used one by Paul Tripp. I love it. I give it away as gifts.

But listen, here's the problem with devotional books. If that's all you use, you will never read the entire Bible. You can be using a devotional book like that for years and you will never have read through the entire Bible.

We're getting ready to start leadership training. And one of the things I want you to know, if you're in leadership training in this church, I'm going to challenge you to read through the entire Bible, if you haven't already. Because I find that I've known many Christians who've been saved for many years, but they've never read the entire Bible.

Daily bread, nice little thought, will never get you through the entire Bible. You need to begin reading through books of the Bible.

That's one place to start. And then if you can, get on a Bible reading plan, that will take you through the entire Bible in a year or even two years. Amen. Read the entire, get the big picture of the Bible.

[20 : 28] You have to determine to do that. It won't just happen. And even if you use a devotional book, supplement your devotional reading with reading through books or, like I said, the entire Bible.

Now, when you're reading your Bible, when you're reading for your devotions, look for what you can learn about God. What did you learn about God in that portion you read? What did you learn about your, ask these questions.

What did you learn about yourself? Ask, is there a promise to hold on to in this passage? Is there a sin in this passage that you need to avoid or repent of?

If you're in the Old Testament, ask, how does the situation or the person that's the main character in the passage reveal Jesus or our need for Jesus?

You see, if you read the Old Testament stories, and I hate using that word stories because it has a bad connotation, but you know what I mean. These are historical narratives. If you read those passages and all you see is Abraham had faith, then you're reading the Old Testament like a Jewish person and not as a Christian because you didn't see Jesus, and they don't see Jesus either.

[21 : 54] If you don't see Jesus in the Old Testament, you're not reading it as a Christian. He may not be in every verse or every page, but expand the situation that's being dealt with and you will find Jesus is the answer to that.

sometimes it's so obvious, boom, when Abraham is about to offer up his son on the altar, remember in Genesis, you know, and God says, no, don't offer your son.

Why? Because centuries later, God will take care of it and he will offer his son. You see, there's some obvious pictures of Jesus there all through the Exodus in different places, but he's there and we know he's there because on the road to Emmaus, Jesus told his disciples that the Old Testament was about him.

If Jesus said that, then it is so. Look for Jesus in the Old Testament. He's beautiful there. Oh, he's beautiful.

And it'll bless you as you read it. Is there a verse or verses you should meditate on throughout the rest of your day?

[23 : 10] Or maybe even memorize? Have you, have you, did something jump out? If something jump out, that's probably the spirit of God saying, listen to this. Write it down.

Put it on a flash card. Put it on your phone. Whatever works for you, keep that in your mind and heart throughout the day. You may want to even get out of, if you're like me, I'll start reading the commentary or I'll pull out a sermon on that, that someone else preached.

That's me. Whatever works for you. When God is speaking to you, Samuel, as a young man, as a good example, speak, Lord.

Your servant is listening. That's us, y'all. That's us. You'd be surprised how many people don't know how to have devotions.

So, this is not just throwing it out there. Pray, ask God to drive home in your life what you've seen there.

[24 : 17] This kind of practice with the word of God puts you in good shape to use the word as a sword when the battle comes.

And saints, the battle is coming. Sometimes my fight starts before I get out of bed. because I begin to think about my day.

And all of a sudden, I'm in a battle. Well, I thought about something I didn't get done the day before or somebody I got to meet with or something somebody is writing or saying that's destructive.

Sometimes I can't get out of bed without the battle being joined. You know what I'm talking about. Some of you know what I'm talking about. Now, some of you are thinking, this is so basic.

Good grief. I'm going to take a nap. I mean, why is he talking about something so basic and easy and simple? We all know this. No, you don't all know this. That's one thing.

[25 : 23] You don't all know. And how would you know anyway? Because you don't know everything everybody knows. Many years ago, the Green Bay Packers lost a game.

They were the early super team. They lost a game they should have won. Their legendary coach, Vince Lombardi, his name still remains, you know.

What's the Super Bowl trophy called? The Lombardi trophy. That's why, because this great coach. Lombardi walked into the locker room. The men were sitting there with their heads down.

They couldn't even look up at him. They loved their coach and they didn't want to let him down. They felt they had botched it, blown it royally. Lombardi got their attention, looked around the room, everybody's eyes, looked around the room as only he could.

If you've seen pictures, he's a little crotchety little guy. Looked him all in the eye. Picked up a football and said, gentlemen, this is a football.

[26 : 27] football. What was he saying? The basics. He said, we got to go back to the basics. He said, the problem is you guys forgot how to block out there.

That's why we lost. The problem is you forgot to ball control. Hold on to the ball. You fumbled. You don't fumble my ball. They forgot, you know, the running crisp, clean patterns to catch the path.

They forgot timing. They forgot penalties. You don't hold. Or at least you don't get caught holding. They forgot the basics. Saints, don't you understand that every time the enemy sucker punches you and knocks you down, you will find that you failed in the basics somewhere.

You will find when you get down to the nuts and bolts of it, you will find all your failures in spiritual warfare come down to a failure in the basics of being a Christian.

Not remembering that you're a child of God. Not knowing the word. Not depending on the other pieces of the armor. Righteousness, peace.

[27 : 48] You didn't depend. Not praying much. Not trusting God, that's faith, and his truth. You listen to the enemy.

He sounded wise and smart. And so, you fell. You were defeated. Just like in football or any sport, in the Christian life, you never leave the basics.

You never leave the basics. Devotions is basics. And you never leave it. If you look down upon the basics, you are not wise.

And you've already been defeated. It's called pride. I already know that. You really don't know what you think you know.

Always go back to the basics. We're going to stop in a minute, but we are giving the sword by the spirit to do close quarters combat.

[28 : 59] We are wrestling with dark forces. Now, how should we understand the spirit's role here? How should we understand? Because what's the spirit doing? This phrase, sword of the spirit, can be taken in two ways.

It could mean that the Holy Spirit is the source of the word. Or it could mean the Holy Spirit is the wielder of the word. And it's certainly biblical to see the Holy Spirit as the originator of the word, isn't it?

The source of the word. 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

The scripture is breathed out by God. That's the spirit of God working to breathe out the word. To make it even clearer, the apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 1, 21.

No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The prophetic writings of the Old Testament and even all of scripture, the New Testament too, come to us as the spirit guided the writers in their writing.

[30 : 19] He used their creativity. He used their vocabulary and language, but they wrote what he wanted. And he gave all the content.

Sometimes they wrote stuff they didn't fully understand themselves. So yes, the spirit is the source of the word, but does not the spirit also wield the word that he inspires?

Left to ourselves, we could not, we could not wield the word rightly. We could even lift it. Like Excalibur or Thor's hammer.

It is only because we are in Christ that we are given the strength and the right to wield the word by the spirit. So we need the spirit to remind us of specific passages of scripture and then guide our hands as we strike with it.

We're going to want to stop here for sake of time, but I just want to remind you of something. It was a old lumberjack.

[31 : 40] A lumberjack. Got up in years. Still hail. Still man's man. Still healthy. He's out there. He wanted to apply for a job as a lumberjack at this particular company.

And so he went up to the head lumberjack and said, hey, I want to chop down some of these trees. I want to help you out. Well, the foreman looked at him and said, I'm sorry, but you are too old. You are too old and too feeble to be chopping down trees.

Oh, man. And the man said, look, no, I'm not. I got guns. I can still do my, I can still handle the work.

Foreman got irritated with him because he kept bothering him. He says, look, I've worked with a lot of lumberjacks and I'm telling you, I'm telling you, you are not able.

You can't do it. So the old man decided to prove that he could do it. So he said, come here, let me show you something. Took him over to a nice size tree and he laid into it. Whap, whap, whap, whap, whap.

[32 : 45] He chopped that thing down in record time. The foreman said, man, where did you learn to chop like that?

You are pretty fast with that heavy X, bro. You're the man. The old man said, well, have you ever heard of the Sahara forest? Leperjacks said, don't you mean Sahara desert?

He says, oh, I guess that's what they call it now. God has been around for a whole lot of years.

He's been chopping down stuff and mowing down stuff with his word for many years. Family, we got to depend on the word of God to fight these battles.

We're going to talk more about this, but I want to get you there. We got to depend on the word. Stop depending on what you think is right. Don't get me wrong. God will work in your conscience.

[33 : 52] Amen. But go to the word. Stop listening to what the culture says is right. Oh boy, really stop looking and listening to that because the culture changes his mind every few years.

And the culture in general will not lead you into God's truth. All because you saw it on the internet doesn't mean it's true.

All because you saw it on Twitter or Instagram or TikTok or Bebo, whatever this stuff is. It doesn't mean it's so. Ask your question.

What does God's word say about this? And family, if you and I are practicing with the sword, the spirit of God will bring us back to it and say, hold it, that don't sound right.

That's that smells like sulfur. Huh? Huh? That don't look too good. Will bring us back. Return to the word.

[34 : 57] Parry, riposte. Let's pray. Father, in the name of Jesus, Lord, as we begin this study on you, the sword of the spirit, will you please begin to return us to reading daily your word and asking good questions and applying your scriptures.

Oh, Lord, give us the love. You speak to us. Your love letter, you are speaking to us in your word. Oh, give us hearts that want to receive it and yearn for it and reach for it every day.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.