

THE MIGHTY SWORD

Ephesians 6:10-17

For several weeks we have been studying about the armor of God. And for the believer I do not know if there could be a more relevant parcel of truth in all of the Word of God. For we have been learning from week to week that we have a very real adversary in this world whose purpose is to kill, steal, and destroy, and his name is Satan, the devil. And Satan's attacks are just as real as he is real, and they are devastating. They have ruined countless Christian lives. They have destroyed countless Christian testimonies and countless Christian homes.

I talked with a dear Christian friend this week who gave me permission to share his story. He is a man who seeks God with his whole heart and has led his family to do the same. He is a serious student of God's Word and an excellent teacher of God's Word. And several years ago he felt led to prepare and teach a study on Satan and his activity. And what he told me concerning this endeavor will make the hair stand up on the back of your neck.

Within days of the first time he started teaching this study on the devil his oldest daughter rebelled against him and his wife and also against God, and went away and spiritually lived in the far country, just like the prodigal son. And she wasted two or three years of precious time she could have been living for Christ, and she gave her parents an untold amount of heartache. The next time my friend began his study on Satan and his wiles, the very next day his house was broken into and burglarized. And just two weeks ago today he started his study for a third time, this time at a different church. And the very next day his only son, who is a precious Christian young man but emotionally and socially challenged, came into a trauma-filled situation, had a breakdown, and committed a serious crime. And now he is in jail facing a possible prison sentence. And my friend told me, "Mike, this is the Goliath of my life. And I am not trying to take the blame away from my son. He shouldn't have done what he did. But I am saying that

there is no doubt that he and my wife and I were, and are still under Satanic attack. For Satan is furious when anyone seeks to expose him and what he is doing; and that's what I was doing".

Beloved, may I say it one more time? The Christian life is not a stroll in the park. It is jungle warfare, and every single child of God is constantly in the crosshairs of the devil. But the idea is really more up close and personal than that. In Ephesians 6:12 Paul says that we wrestle with Satan, and in the Greek language the word "wrestle" indicates hand-to-hand combat. Recently I was fascinated with one Navy Seal's account of the storming of Osama Bin Laden's compound just a little over a year ago. And this Seal found himself in hand-to-hand combat with one of Bin Laden's associates. And friends, there was no thought in either man's mind of anything but a fight for his life. There was no saying "calf rope" by one of the combatants and the struggle ending. They both knew that one of them would die.

That's the type of struggle we are engaged in with the devil. Our soul is secure, praise God, but make no mistake about it, the devil is out to take you out!! And the moment a Christian starts to get serious about his faith and doing damage to Satan's kingdom he had better get ready, for the attack is coming! And for that reason it is critical that we learn about the resources that God has given to withstand his attacks and also to send the devil running for his own safety. So turn once more in your Bibles, please, to Ephesians 6:10-17. Today we are going to take a look at the only offensive piece of the armor of God, the sword. But before we do I want us to take a brief review of the rest of our armor.

We began a few weeks ago by examining the belt of truth. And the belt of truth is the Word of God. Note that it is the first piece of the armor we are to put on. And this is not by happenstance. For if we do not have the promises of God's Word to claim in our battles we are absolutely no match for our enemy, for he is much stronger than we. David wrote, "My soul clings to the dust. Revive me according to Your Word" (Psalm 119:25). Just before the children of Israel entered Canaan some of Moses' last instructions were, "Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among

you today....for it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life...” (Deuteronomy 32:46, 47). How much clearer could Moses state it? Israel’s obedience or disobedience to God’s Word was the one factor that would spell their victory or their defeat in Canaan. And I could never emphasize strongly enough how essential it is for you and me to hide God’s Word in our hearts. That we read it, memorize it, and meditate on it daily.

We are also to put on the breastplate of righteousness. This is living daily a life of holiness. Not only knowing the Word, but obeying the Word. And we learned a few weeks ago that without godly living we do great harm to ourselves, to others, and even to God. Ezekiel 6:9 says that God was crushed by Israel’s adulterous heart and their idolatry. And we summed up a Christian’s life without the breastplate of righteousness in three words, a **wasted life**.

And then we looked at the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace and learned that this represents the assurance of salvation. These shoes give us the secure footing to stand firm against all Satanic assaults and also are the highest quality marching shoe as we move out to battle in confidence, because we know that our sins are forgiven and come what may, even if we die for our faith, Heaven is our eternal home.

Next we talked about the shield of faith. Actually this would be more clearly identified as faith’s shield, and we saw that faith’s shield is Jesus Himself. How important it is that we take our shield into battle! For with it we neutralize all of the arrows of destruction that Satan hurls at us daily. Not as a threat to our salvation, but to cause us to stray from the path of holiness. Because as we’ve seen; a wayward life is a wasted life.

And two weeks ago we looked at the helmet of salvation. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8 Paul calls it the helmet of the hope of salvation. This is our certain hope of victory in eternity. This is the certain hope that the devil is a defeated foe – that he is only biding his time on death row before he is cast into the lake of fire, and all of the saved will rule with King Jesus

forever more. What an encouragement this is for us not to quit running our race! But as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4, it is imperative that we keep our eyes on the things that are not seen – the eternal things – seeing Jesus, seeing our rewards that He will give us for being faithful, seeing the final rest He will give us from all of our battles we are fighting now. Thank God for the helmet of the hope of salvation.

Now, I want to show you something that is exciting to me, something that will bundle up all of these truths about the armor of God into one neat, simple, glorious package. And the package is a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that we are to put on our belt of truth, our breastplate of righteousness, our shoes of the gospel of peace, our helmet of salvation, and we are to take up the shield of faith. But in Romans 13:14 God tells us to do something else. He says, “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts”. We are to put on Christ. Just as we put on our clothes in the morning, by faith we are to put on Christ, we are to clothe ourselves with Him. We are to say, “Jesus, clothe me with Yourself, cover me, protect me completely today”.

Now, there is a good reason for clothing ourselves with Christ. And that is, in Christ we find the personification, the fleshing out, of every piece of the armor of God. Take for example the belt of truth. What does Jesus say about Himself? “I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life”. And as we put on Christ every day, He leads us into God’s truth. And it is the same way with every other piece of the Christian’s armor. We are to put on the breastplate of righteousness, and in 1 Corinthians 1:30 Paul writes that Jesus is our sanctification, which is our righteousness. We are to put on the shoes of the gospel of peace, and Jesus says in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken unto you, that in ME you may have peace”. Jesus is our peace. We are to take up faith’s shield, and David writes in Psalm 144:2 that Jehovah, Who is Jesus, is our shield. And finally, Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:1 that Jesus is our hope, that is, He is the helmet of the hope of our future salvation. Beloved, in your daily struggles with Satan and all of the

temptations he hurls at you, **Jesus is all you need!** And that is not just pious preacher talk. God says in Colossians. 1:10, “And you are complete in Him, Who is the head over all principality and power”.

Now, I want to take this one step further, and I want you to stay with me. For if you are in the midst of a battle with the devil today, God has great encouragement for you in what I’m about to share. This idea of putting on Christ may seem a little strange to you, a little hard to grasp. For it’s not an objective thing, it is not tangible. And you may be wondering, “Is this something that is really attainable for every Christian, even me?” Well, I can assure you that it is. And that is because if you know Christ as your Lord and Savior at least once in your life you’ve already put on Christ. For Paul writes in Galatians 3:27 “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”. Now, the baptism Paul speaks of here is Spirit baptism, receiving the Holy Spirit the moment of salvation. And Paul says that the moment this happens – the moment you are saved and receive the Holy Spirit you also put on Christ. And the Greek word is the very same word that Paul uses when he exhorts the Romans to put on Christ in Romans 13.

So you see, beloved, putting on Christ as your armor every day is not beyond your potential, for you’ve done it already, the moment you were saved. But here’s the deal. The armor of God is like the anointing of God. The psalmist said, “I have been anointed with fresh oil” (Psalm 92:10). We need a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit every day. Yesterday’s anointing won’t meet the temptations of today. And we every day by faith we need to put on Christ, we need to trust Him to clothe us and shield us from all of the fiery darts of the devil. But know this. He Who clothed you once with Himself will surely clothe you again!! All you have to do is ask. And may God help you to ask today.

But now I want to move from the introduction to the main part of my message. But ladies, don’t worry about your roast. The main part is the shorter part today. Up until this time we have been talking about armor, armor to defend ourselves from the attacks of Satan. But God never

intended for the church to live in the defensive mode all the time! Some of the time, yes. But Jesus told His disciples, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it". And by the way, that's a part of our purpose statement at Grant's Creek. We are preaching Christ and building His church. And the idea is not that the church is holed up inside its four walls, buckling down from a wicked world outside, doing our best just to stave off the ravenous wolves of hell lest we be devoured. NO! We are to be on the offensive, and the haunts of hell should be buckling down against us! And so after teaching us about how we are to defend ourselves from Satan's attacks, Paul goes on to tell us how to counterattack, and he begins with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Beloved, I dare say that most of us do not really understand just how powerful God's Word really is. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that it is living, and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. And as to the magnitude of its power, we read in Genesis 1 that God merely spoke the words, "Let there be light" and there was light. He did not lift a finger. And with the single exception of man God did not lift a finger to create the entire universe. He spoke and it was done. We read in Revelation 19:15 that when Jesus returns He will smite the nations with a sharp sword coming out of His mouth, and that sword is His Word. Think of it! All of the weaponry that the antichrist can marshal throughout the entire world will be pointed toward King Jesus as He descends from Heaven on His white horse, and He destroys them all in a split second by the words of His mouth. Friends, the Word of God is power!

I don't suppose there has ever been a modern saint who was more aware of the reality of the devil than Martin Luther. It is said that Luther felt the devil's presence so strongly in his room one night that he threw an ink well at him. But Luther also knew that the source of his power against Satan was the Word of God. Most of you have heard the great old hymn that Luther penned, A Mighty Fortress is our God. Listen to the third verse:

And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us;

The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall
fell him.

Did you catch it? “One little word shall fell him”. One little word will be the devil’s defeat and doom. Luther certainly knew that scripture in Revelation! And beloved, here is the glorious truth to you and me. We have this Word as our artillery in our war with Satan. It is the Bible you hold in your lap, God’s infallible, perfect Word. And therefore when we go out to snatch lost souls out of the burning, we dare not go with any other weapon.

You know, it is amazing how many Christians and many churches will use every weapon in the book but the right one in seeking to win people to faith in Jesus Christ. We will engage an unsaved person in a conversation about spiritual things and we will give them our opinion on the matter. Or we’ll tell them what we heard some expert say on TV. But there is only one thing wrong with that approach. It does not produce saving faith. For the Bible says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. And then there is another method that many of us use. It has been around for centuries but in recent years been tagged with a specific title. It’s called “love bombing”. It was first used as a derogatory term regarding how cult members would smother would-be converts with insincere acts of “love” just to get them hooked. But when they came into the fold it was apparent pretty quickly that it was all a ruse.

But let me tell you, God’s people can be guilty of love bombing, too. Now don’t get me wrong. Romans 2:4 tells us that the goodness of God leads men to repentance. Jesus’ sincere love for men is what drew them to Him when He walked on the earth, and our sincere love for men is what draws them to Him now. And many Christians will sincerely reach out and seek to love the unsaved. But loving lost sinners alone will never get them an inch off the ground toward Heaven, and sometimes that’s all we ever do. But as we love them we must, we must follow up with the Word.

Many of us have just finished a study of the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth in Sunday School. And we know how wicked God's people were in those days. And you remember that the last verse of the book of Judges says that everyone did what was right in his own eyes. But there is an extremely enlightening verse in 1 Samuel that explains Israel's ungodliness. 1 Samuel 3:1 says, "And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation." The word of the Lord was rare. And beloved, despite the churches in America that are still preaching the old, old story that Jesus died to save sinners, and despite all of the gospel that is going out over the airwaves, this is the reason that so many are perishing in their sins. The word of the Lord is rare. Millions and teeming millions have never heard the clear message of salvation. And may God help us to be a church that preaches and teaches the Word!

So teachers, I exhort you, teach the Word! Don't let an opportunity pass to present the plan of salvation in your class when the lesson lends itself, no matter what age you teach. Teach them that good people are sinners, too. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". Romans 3:23. Teach them that the penalty of their sin is eternal death. "For the wages of sin is death". Romans 6:23. Teach them that only through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ can they be saved. Peter proclaimed at Pentecost, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." Acts 2:38. And may all of us, pastor, staff, deacons, young people, every Christian, be quick to seize opportunities that God gives us to proclaim the Word to someone who needs Jesus. And if we sincerely ask Him, He will give us the opportunities. And God promises us in Isaiah 55:11 that when we share His Word it will not return unto Him void. It will accomplish what He pleases.

Many years ago something happened in a Moscow theater that illustrates what happens when God's people are faithful to share His Word. Matinee idol Alexander Rostovzev was converted while playing the role of Jesus in a sacrilegious play entitled *Christ in a Tuxedo*. He was supposed to read two verses from the Sermon on the Mount, remove his gown, and cry out, "Give me my tuxedo and top hat!" But as he read the words, "Blessed are

the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted," he began to tremble. Instead of following the script, he kept reading from Matthew 5, ignoring the coughs, calls, and foot-stamping of his fellow actors. Finally, recalling a verse he had learned in his childhood in the Russian Orthodox church, he said, "Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Before the curtain could be lowered, Rostovzev had accepted Christ as His personal Savior.