10-20-19

Ephesians 6:14-17 (6)

Up to this point in our study of the spiritual armor that is available to us through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we have primarily defensive pieces. Notice that we seem to need more in the way of defense than offence. That is because we are called to stand; we are called to stand firm. And what we stand firm on is the word of God. That involves all His warnings and promises that we read in the Bible. It includes His commands and rebukes; His wonderous display of love and His fearful displays of wrath. We must stand firm on His written word in the Bible and His incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

Standing firm means believing in the word no matter what arguments are brought against it; no matter what satan throws at you; no matter how bad life seems to be. Because the word of God means life, eternal life; and if we truly believe in God and His word, we know that something much better is coming. If we truly believe, then we will actually live our lives accordingly. There are things we must honestly ask ourselves: Do I live my daily life as if heaven is real and that I will live there? Do we really make our decisions based on the knowledge of Christ and how He wants us to live?

To be able to answer yes to these questions requires that the belt of truth be firmly girded about our body; that it be firmly girded about our minds and hearts. As we saw before, the belt of truth, which is God’s word in the Bible, is what holds all the other pieces in place and makes them all effective. And this includes the sword of the Spirit.

Paul tells us to “take … the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” That first word “take” is important. We must take the sword in our hand and we must have it always at the ready. Remember from Nehemiah 4:17, “those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon”. All of us carry burdens in this life; if we carry them properly, we will be doing the work of the Lord. But see that as we carry and work, we are to be armed. Our weapon is the sword of the Spirit.

The Spirit that Paul mentions here is not the human spirit, but the Holy Spirit. He is a full person of the one triune God. So, how is the sword of the Spirit the word of God? First, let’s consider the word of God as revealed in the Bible. The Bible is made up of 66 separate books; books that were authored by many different people over the span of several centuries. And yet, it is all coherent and fits together. It all brings us to one person: Jesus. The more you look, the more you find intricate ties that can only be seen looking backward through Christ. This is just one argument for there being a divine author; and the author is the Holy Spirit.

Just as one example of these intricacies, consider John 20. Jesus has risen from the dead and the tomb is empty. The apostles leave the scene and Mary Magdalene is left alone. Jesus appears to her, but she doesn’t recognize Him. In verse 15 we read:

Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

If we read over that quickly, we don’t even think about Mary mistaking Jesus for a gardener. Remember that she had arrived while it was still dark. Even in the time it took to get Peter and John, they could have only looked into the tomb in the first rays of light. Why would the gardener be there so early?

Furthermore, you can be sure that He wasn’t standing there with tools in His hands.

Consider that in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul refers to Jesus as the “last Adam”. In other words, when Adam was created, he was perfectly sinless. There has never been another perfectly sinless man until Jesus. The difference is that Adam messed up while Jesus remained perfect. But here we have a connection established between Jesus and Adam.

Now we go to Genesis 2:15 where it tells us what God did with Adam after He created him. Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. From this we see that Adam was a gardener. The Bible is full of hundreds of these little threads flowing through it; the word of God in the Bible is from the Holy Spirit. He wrote the Bible through the hands of men whom He inspired.

Now, in addition to the Bible, Jesus Himself is the Word of God made flesh and the Holy Spirit was very involved in this also. In Genesis 2:7 we read, “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” The Hebrew word for breath is the same as the word for spirit. What we see here is that the Holy Spirit gives life.

Next, we go to Genesis 3:15 to see that God already had a plan to save mankind from the sin they were bound to.

And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her seed;  
He shall bruise you on the head,  
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

It is vital to understand that the One who will defeat satan is from the seed of the woman, not the man. That is why we must maintain the truth of the virgin birth of Christ. If Jesus’ father was a man, then He is not the only begotten Son of God and this promise of Genesis 3:15 is not true.

Moving to Luke chapter 1, Mary asks the angel how she can be with child; not out of disbelief, but out of wonder. The angel responds in verse 35:

The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”

It is the Holy Spirit who created the life of the man Jesus, using the seed of the woman Mary. We can see that the word of God, both in the Bible and in Jesus, has been given through the Holy Spirit. So, the word of God is “of the Spirit”.

Let’s continue by looking at the word “sword”. How does this fit in with Scripture? We can certainly find it in Hebrews 4:12.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

This is a deep verse that primarily tells us that Scripture is able to reach the deepest part of a person and convict them either to salvation or destruction. The Lord God will use it in that way and that is the effect of the Gospel. We see here how the word of God can be thought of as a sword and used as a spiritual sword.

Now, what is the difference between the belt of truth, which is the word of God, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God? The belt of truth is the whole of Scripture; it is the revelation of the character of God and of His plan. It contains all that He has given us; which in turn, is all we need. The sword of the Spirit is to take individual passages of Scripture and use them as a weapon of either defense or offence.

Our most wonderful example of this in the Bible is the story of Jesus’ temptation in the desert. In that account, we are told of three specific temptations that satan spoke to Jesus. These three temptations were regarding physical things, but make no mistake; behind them were deeply spiritual factors. For Jesus to have fallen for any of them would have been disastrous. This was a spiritual attack, so, Jesus used the sword of the Spirit. Jesus countered each temptation with Scripture; each response was a quotation from Deuteronomy.

In this way, Jesus used the sword of the Spirit as a defensive weapon. He used it to counter all the attacks of satan. Jesus would have also used the rest of the spiritual armor to keep satan’s words from getting to Him; to discern the truth amongst the lies. But then Jesus also used the sword of the Spirit in an offensive manner; He said, “Go, satan.” Now that statement wasn’t in Scripture before. But where did it come from? It came from Jesus, who is the Word of God. In this one account we see the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, written and incarnate being used for both defense and offense.

Paul tells us about all the armor of God so that we might use it. It is all there for us, including the sword of the Spirit. This is another reason that it is imperative that we read and study our Bibles and memorize Scripture passages; In order to use the sword, we have to have it. If you happen to have a particular temptation that you struggle with, it is good to search the Bible for Scriptures that deal with it so that you always have them on hand.

One of the best things about this is that the Spirit and the word of God go together. If we have Scripture stored up in our heart, the Holy Spirit will bring it to mind at the proper time. It is by His wisdom and guidance that the sword is used correctly.

Let’s look at a few examples. Sometimes the devil gets us to thinking that there are so many things we might like to have. If we only had more money. If we dwell on these things, we can become very unhappy; which is exactly what satan wants, he wants to steal your joy. We can fight this temptation with 1 Timothy 6:8, “If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.”

Or perhaps it goes deeper than material things and we feel the stress of sickness or the stress of just being a Christian; 2 Corinthians 12:10, “Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

What about temptation to adultery? And remember that even lustful thoughts are adulteries of the heart. Remember what Joseph said when he was tempted in this matter: “How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?” That’s from Genesis 39:9. See how this calls to mind that the offense is against our loving God, not simply against ourselves or another person. What a sharp sword to cut down temptation.

These are just simple examples but hopefully they give you an idea of how to use the sword of the Spirit. Just call these Scriptures to mind when temptation strikes. This is resisting the devil and as James tells us in chapter 4 verse 7; Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

As far as an offensive weapon, it can be used the same way we read about Jesus using it. He told demons and devils to leave, and they did. We have this same ability through the powerful name of Jesus. We tell it to leave in Jesus’ name. Our example is Paul during his time in Philippi. He was followed by a slave girl possessed by a demon. In Acts 16:18 we read, “Paul … turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out at that very moment.” See that he used the power of Jesus’ name and didn’t try to remove it in his own strength.

The other important area to use the sword offensively is against the kingdom of satan in order to free captives. In other words, spreading the Gospel. When we tell someone of the Gospel, we must use Scripture as much as possible along with our own words. This is because “the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

It is the word of God that will actually bring a person to repentance and acceptance of Christ as Saviour. Tell the person John 3:16. Tell them Romans 1:18; For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Tell them Acts 16:31; “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 1 John 2:2; [Jesus] Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. And from 1 Corinthians 15:3; Christ died for our sins.

Use the Scriptures that tell about Jesus and what He has done for all those who will accept Him. These Scriptures are a sharp sword that can break chains that bind and even slice away blindness. Remember that we are not only called to stand firm ourselves, but to bring others to that saving rock of Christ that they too, may be protected from the fiery darts of satan.

Prayer

Almighty God, we praise You for the provision You have made for our protection; the spiritual armor You have provided for us to resist the attacks of satan. But even more, we recognize that You are the One who ultimately controls how much of his power he can use. You are sovereign God and all creation is subject to Your direction and restraint.

We ask for the help of Your Holy Spirit, that He would call to our minds Your word. Bring to us at the proper time those life saving words of Scripture, that by it, we may repel the attacks of evil. But also, Lord, that we may use Your word to understand You and Your will, so that we may live according to Your pleasure and as Your servants.

Give us strength to stand. We wish to stand firmly on the immovable rock of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. He is our fortress; our very present help in this world of trouble. We bless You, LORD God, for Your constant provision of all we need.

We pray in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord

Amen