

SERMON SERIES: SPIRITUAL WARFARE 101
SERMON: THE RHEMA SWORD
2-21-21

Ephesians 6:10-17 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

OPENER:

(Set up scripture)

In the book of Nehemiah we read about how the Israelites returned from captivity to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah had the blessing of King Artaxerces and provision, but not everyone was glad that Israel was returning to their land to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls. There were enemies who sought to destroy and kill the Israelites, and keep them from returning to the land God had given to them.

Nehemiah 4:17-18.....The laborers carried on their work with one hand supporting their load and one hand holding a weapon. ¹⁸ All the builders had a sword belted to their side. The trumpeter stayed with me to sound the alarm.

(Explain scripture)

Nehemiah was aware of these enemies, and so as he assigned tasks and went about overseeing the rebuilding of the walls, he instructed the workers to strap a sword to their side so that if enemies appeared, they could defend themselves.

(Application)

As we work for the kingdom of God, we must keep a sword strapped to our side. Not a sword made from steel—for our struggle is not against flesh and blood—but a spiritual sword to attacks of the devil.

Every day you are in a battle.

**THE DEVIL TRIES TO STOP YOU FROM BUILDING SPIRITUAL WALLS -
DEFENDING YOUR MORAL BORDERS AND STOP YOU FROM RESCUING
OTHERS.**

We must take up the sword and carry it with us - keep our swords at hand. - keep them polished and sharp and know how to use them.

I want to talk to you about three things about this Sword:

1. What the sword was and the way it was used by Roman soldiers in Paul's day.
2. What the sword is for us as Christians in spiritual warfare.
3. How we can take up the sword in battle.

1. WHAT WAS THE SWORD USED BY THE ROMANS?

We all know what a sword looks like. And we have all seen pictures or movies of Roman soldiers carrying their sword. The swords that were typically used in Paul's day were made of iron, and were double-edged. One surprising characteristic about the Roman soldier's sword, was that the blade was only about 18 inches in length.

When we think of a sword, we imagine one that is about three to four feet long, like those carried by Medieval knights. If I had to choose between a sword that was 18 inches or three feet I would choose the longer sword. But the Roman military preferred the shorter sword. This was not because they did not have the longer swords. They did. But due of its size and weight, it had to be used with two hands, which didn't allow the soldier to hold a shield.

The Roman soldiers were primarily trained in use of the short sword, called a *gladius*. This is the sword that Paul refers to here in *Ephesians 6:17*. This sword was light and could be maneuvered quickly and with ease. It also only required only one hand to use it, which allowed the soldier to carry a shield.

In training with this short sword, the soldier was taught to stab and thrust instead of cut or slash. The reason is because a cut, even delivered with force, usually does not kill. It only wounds. But a stab, as Roman soldiers were trained to do, they had a much higher probability of hitting a vital organ, killing the enemy soldier instead of just wounding him.

Roman soldiers did carry spears and pikes, these were only used when the soldiers sought to advance their position against an enemy position. They would form up in a tight unit, with shields interlocked, and then advance forward while thrusting with their spears. Once they arrived at the desired position, they would use the short sword to hold the ground which they had just obtained.

**THE SWORD THAT PAUL IS TALKING ABOUT IS PRIMARILY DEFENSIVE.
THE SWORD WAS NOT USED TO ADVANCE UPON THE ENEMY BUT TO DEFEND
A POSITION ON THE BATTLEFIELD
THAT HAD ALREADY BEEN GAINED.**

**REMEMBER, YOUR NUMBER ONE TASK IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS TO "STAND
YOUR GROUND".**

The devil is arrogant and brazen and he will get up close and personal with you. If he was arrogant enough to stand up against God in heaven he will definitely attack you on the ground you are standing on. So, you must use your Sword to defend your position.

2. WHAT IS THIS SPIRITUAL SWORD?

⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Paul calls this sword is the sword *of the Spirit*, and then states that this sword *is the Word of God*.

The Word of God, as Paul writes of it here, is not exactly the same thing as the Bible. Many people think they have the sword of the Spirit if they have a Bible. You do not have the sword of the Spirit if you own a Bible. You do not take up the sword of the Spirit by carrying your Bible. Paul does not use the normal term here for the Word of God.

In the Bible the Word of God usually refers to two words:

- *graphe* = writings or *logos* which means word. Both terms refer to Scripture, in its entirety, as it was originally written down on paper by the original authors. The Bible is our *graphe* (the writings) or *logos* (the Word of God)

Logos, can also refer to Jesus as the living, Word of God (cf. John 1:1-11). So, there is a written *logos*, the Bible, and a living *Logos*, Jesus.

Paul uses the Greek word *rhēma*.

rhēma = refers to *speaking* individual verses or passages from Scripture.

rhēma is when the written words of Scripture are spoken

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT ARE THE VERSES AND PASSAGES OF THE BIBLE WHICH WE CAN WEILD QUICKLY IN BATTLE.

THE STATEMENTS -THE PROMISES AND THE TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE ARE GOOD FOR STABBING AND THRUSTING INTO THE WEAK SPOTS OF OUR ENEMY.

>Every time you memorize a verse, you have added power to your sword.

>Every time you learn a new truth about a verse, you have sharpened the blades on that sword.

>Every time you learn a new way to apply a verse, you have become quicker and more deadly in using your sword.

ILLUSTRATION:

RHEMA IS POWERFUL

GOD SPOKE EVERYTHING INTO EXISTENCE AND RHEMA WENT FORTH

Genesis 1 - the phrase “*God said*” is written 10 times in the count of creation.

Isaiah 55:10-11 *The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. ¹¹ It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.*

WHEN GOD SPEAKS IT IS MORE THAN SOUND - SPIRIT GOES FORTH!

Each time God spoke creative living power went forth. The Living Spirit of God went forth out of His mouth and touched the physical and brought transformation and new things.

JESUS SPOKE AND RHEMA WENT FORTH

By His words the lame were healed, the blind received their sight, lepers were made completely whole and the dead came back to life.

Jesus said, “I Am He” as Judas and the Roman soldiers came to arrest him they all fell to the ground.

When Jesus returns to bring judgment on the nations, he will do so with the words he speaks.

**WHEN YOU SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS RELEASED INTO
THE ATMOSPHERE - INTO THE SPIRIT
WORLD TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY.**

**THE WORD OF GOD SPOKEN IS LIKE A MIGHTY SWORD THAT STRIKES THE
ENEMY AND WEAKENS HIM AND HIS SCHEMES AGAINST YOU.**

ILLUSTRATION:

What if Eve had spoken the Word of God when the devil came to tempt her? She didn't. She didn't repeat what God said. She added to God's words. She repeated the lies of the devil as he tempted her.

ILLUSTRATION:

Remember, this is how Jesus defeated the temptations of the devil in the wilderness. When Satan came at Jesus with three temptations, Jesus used verses from Scripture as a way to defend himself of the attacks of the devil. He said, “It is written” “It is written” “It is written”. We can do the same thing.

3. HOW DOES THIS SWORD DEFEND US?

FIRST: IT HELPS US DEFEAT THE LIES OF THE ENEMY

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

SECOND: IT TEACHES AND CORRECTS US

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. ¹⁷ God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

It is like a scalpel, carefully cutting away all the dead flesh and scar tissue that is left behind from our old way of life. It is a knife that cuts the bonds of sin that trip us up and drag us down.

THIRD: IT EXPOSES OUR DEEPEST THOUGHTS AND DESIRES

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.

**OUR ACTIONS DON'T ALWAYS REVEAL OUR MOTIVES.
SOMETIME WE CAN DO A RIGHT THING WITH A WRONG MOTIVE.**

REMEMBER, GOD NOT ONLY JUDGES OUR ACTIONS, BUT OUR HEART.

The fact that it had two edges made it easier to penetrate, as well as to cut in every way. The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; the Word of God reaches the "heart," the very center of action, and lays open the motives and feelings of those it touches.

**TO GET TO THE CORE OF SOMETHING YOU HAVE
TO CUT IT OPEN.**

**THE WORD OF GOD WILL CUT YOU TO THE CORE AND EXPOSE THINGS THAT
ARE HIDDEN AND THINGS
THAT YOU CANNOT SEE.**

That is why when we feel conviction that it penetrates us and hurts. The sword is piercing our heart and laying it open so we can see the truth and deception that lies there.

ILLUSTRATION:

Much like a skilled surgeon cuts and removes the disease from our bodies or the infected parts, the Word of God like a sharp scalpel cuts and removes the corruptness in our hearts and minds. It will Cut out and remove that wrong motive. It will Cut out and remove the lie that contradicts the truth of God.

**GOD WILL BREAK YOU TO REMAKE YOU.
GOD WILL WOUND YOU TO HEAL YOU.**

FOURTH: IT PIERCES MEN'S HEARTS TO CONVICT AND SHOW THEM SALVATION

Romans 10:17 ***So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.***

4. HOW DO WE TAKE UP THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT?

The only way to take up the sword of the Spirit is to become familiar with the Scriptures. The only way to arm yourself with the word of God is to memorize, study, and learn the word of God. We must practice using the Scriptures. We must drill with the Bible through endless repetition and training.

We must exercise with the Bible until it is stamped into our minds, so that when it is needed, our muscle memory kicks in and the use of the sword becomes second nature and automatic.

There are no short cuts or fast tracks. The only way to take up the Sword of the Spirit is to spend as much time as you possibly can in the word of God. Read it. Study it. Memorize it. Talk about it. Meditate upon it. Pray it. Think about it.

ILLUSTRATION:

Just as the Roman soldiers spent hours every day drilling with their sword, so also, we must spend plenty of time drilling with ours. This is the only way to take up the sword of the Spirit so that it is ready and available on the field of spiritual warfare.

APPLICATION:

> "Very often, we feel like God does not love us and cannot forgive us for some sin we have committed. The truths or verses in Scripture can remind us of God's infinite love and complete forgiveness?"

> "A friend is telling you that Jesus Christ was just *a man*, but He was not the one and only God. Where would you turn in Scripture?"

>Or someone could say, “A coworker has gone through some troubling times in her life, and she walks up to you some day, and says, ‘You’re a Christian right? What must I do to get to heaven?’” What would you tell him?

- > You are being tempted to lash out against someone who has hurt you.**
- > You are jealous of someone.**
- > You are being tempted to hang out at that party.**

We must know the Bible well enough so that we are ready for any challenge that comes our way. Many Christians are weak and ineffective at defending themselves against the attacks of the devil because they have no skill with their sword.

You might have the shiniest armor, the newest sandals, a perfect leather belt, and a helmet with no dents or rust, but if you cannot handle the word of truth, then Satan can press his attack with no thought of getting harmed or chased off. He can take his sweet time in wearing us down until we fall to the ground from fatigue.

To truly stop the attacks of the devil, you must defend yourself with a counter-attack, which you can only do with the sword of the Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION:

Roman soldiers knew that their skill with the sword was their lifeline in battle. The better you were with your sword, the greater your chances were of survival. And so that is why the best soldiers spent almost all of their free time practicing with the sword.