

**The Sword of the Spirit – Part 2**  
Sermon by Pastor Joe Davis  
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**I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW**

As we begin today, I'd like you to imagine with me for a moment that you're living in Europe around 600 years ago. I'm really stretching your imagination already today, aren't I? But try to bear with me and take yourself back to a time period without cars or trains or electricity or cell phones or computers or guns or canons or tanks or fighter jets...a time when all your travel is done by walking or horseback or riding in a horse-drawn buggy, and boats provide the only form of transportation over the ocean...a time when wars are fought on the ground with swords and daggers and arrows and large armies running toward each other to clash in hand-to-hand combat.

Have you ever watched movies about this time period and tried to imagine how terrifying it must have been to be part of an army rushing forward to clash with your enemies in hand-to-hand combat? Have you imagined yourself on the front line and wondered if you'd have the courage to do it and what you'd be thinking as you did? Well, if you haven't imagined this before, I want you to do it now. Picture yourself on the front line, running with all you have to meet an opposing army. You have all your armor on, you're mentally prepared and you've conquered your fears...you're all in!

As you near the enemy, you hear your fellow warriors pulling their swords and shouting the battle cry and you reach for your sword, raising your battle cry to join the chorus. But as your hand reaches down for the handle of your sword, your heart sinks and your courage starts to crumble as you realize with a sinking feeling that you forgot to bring your sword. You're about to meet the enemy with no weapon to fight with. His sword is sharpened and gleaming in the sunlight and coming right at you within seconds and your only hope now is to try and protect yourself with your shield for as long as you can. Advancing against him and defeating him is no longer possible and your chances of survival are extremely slim.

As you desperately try and protect yourself with your shield as the enemy's sword clashes against it, you see your best friend out of the corner of your eye trying to use his sword in the battle. Unfortunately, your friend had never put much time into learning how to use his sword effectively, and the man he was fighting against was quickly gaining the upper hand and had soon knocked the sword out of your friend's hand and left him in the same situation as you...trying to hang onto life by a thread with only his shield to do the job. You could see that it was only a matter of time until you and your friend would be utterly defeated in this battle, and neither of you had any hope of actually winning it.

Well, today I'd like to argue that this is much what we're like in our spiritual battle with the forces of wickedness when we either leave the sword of the Spirit at home or don't learn how to use it appropriately and effectively in the battle. We each have a sharp, double-edged sword in the Word of God, and we'd be utterly foolish to go into battle without it. And yet many of us here today are either leaving it sitting on the shelf at home or not practicing with it so we'll be ready to use it effectively when we clash with the enemy.

Today's message is Part 2 of the Sword of the Spirit, from the last half of Ephesians 6, verse 17, and our focus this week will be on using the sword effectively and what will happen when we do. Let's read verses 10 through 18 of Ephesians chapter 6 to begin:

***10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer***

***and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,...***

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word.

## **II. USING THE SWORD**

***And take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*** The Spirit's sword we've been given to use in the battle is the word of God. We could theorize all day about what Paul really meant by "the word of God" or try to come up with some complicated explanation that might allow us to hide behind the clear words of Scripture, but we're not going to waste time doing that. What Paul is talking about here is the very words of God that have been graciously given to us in the Bible. The Bible is the Spirit's sword and what we need to take with us into the battle and learn to skillfully use to protect ourselves, defeat the enemy and advance God's kingdom.

So I'd like to spend some time now looking at what Scripture says about how we take this sword and learn to use it effectively. I have a PowerPoint for us today since we'll be looking at quite a few verses. In my study I've come up with 6 guidelines to using the sword effectively...6 ways we can become strong swordsmen by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. So let's take a look at what the Word teaches us.

### **A. Long for the Word and believe it's what you need to survive and grow (1 Peter 2:1-3; Acts 17:10-12; Hebrews 4:2-3)**

The first guideline to using the Spirit's sword effectively is this: *Long for the Word and believe it's what you need to survive and grow.* This longing and heart belief comes from God and is not something you can muster up on your own. Begin asking God to create a longing within you for His Word and a firm conviction that it truly is what you need to survive and grow in life and the battle you're facing. This is where your training as a skilled swordsman begins.

1 Peter 2, verses 1 to 3 tell us this:

***1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.***

The way we each need to view God's Word is the way a baby views its mother's milk and needs that milk to survive and grow. What do babies do? They sleep and eat; sleep and eat; sleep and eat...with quite a bit of crying and pooping along the way as well! But the primary reason for the crying of most babies is to let someone know they want milk and they want it now! And they must have milk on a regular basis or they'll eventually die.

I'd like to ask you today: Do you ever feel this way about the Word of God? Do you long for it like you longed for your mother's milk as a baby? Do you struggle and feel lost and empty when you don't feed on it on a regular basis? Does your heart cry out for it when you're too busy to read it? I hope so, because that's the way we will feel if our view of God's Word is where it should be. If you're not there, ask the Spirit to create that longing within you and that heart belief that it truly is what you need to survive and grow and win the battle. Start reading it regularly and asking the Spirit to bring it alive to you and allow you to hear what you need to hear.

The attitude toward Scripture we need is the attitude the Bereans had in Acts chapter 17, verse 11. Luke tells us this about them:

***11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.***

Notice that people who have a longing for God's Word are viewed as noble-minded from God's perspective. The Bereans were noble-minded because they listened with eagerness to what God's messengers were saying, and then they put everything they heard to the test of Scripture...knowing and believing in their hearts that it contained everything they needed to discover truth and navigate life successfully.

Do you want to be noble-minded from God's perspective? Long for the pure milk of the Word and explore it with eagerness and childlike belief that it's the only way you can survive and grow and win the battle.

**B. Listen carefully to the Word with honesty and humility (Luke 8:11-15; James 1:21)**

The second guideline for using the sword of the Spirit effectively is this: *Regularly listen carefully to the Word with honesty and humility.* I'm sure most of us are quite familiar with the parable of the sower, and I'd like to look at it briefly today because it speaks directly about the Spirit's sword, the word of God. The seed in the parable is the word of God. Let me read for you Luke chapter 8, verses 11 to 15:

***11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. 13 "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.***

We're going to return to this parable a couple more times today, but I'd like to focus first on the seed in the good soil in verse 15. Notice that the Word of God in the good soil grows into a healthy plant that survives the elements and bears fruit. This seed of the Word of the God grows within people when they listen carefully to it with honesty, allowing it to speak truth into their lives.

The Word of God as a seed that grows when received in a certain way is also spoken of in James chapter 1, verse 21, which says this:

***Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.***

In this verse we see honesty and humility together as the way to receive the Word of God and allow it to grow within us. The honesty is in acknowledging the filthiness and wickedness the Word often uncovers within us, rather than trying to hide it from God or pretend it's not there. Instead, in honesty and humility we recognize our failings, allowing the Word to shine its light on them and show us the way out and put filthiness and wickedness aside by the power of the Spirit.

When we listen carefully to the Word with honesty and humility, the power of the Word is activated and we begin to walk into freedom like we've never known. The Word is so powerful in fact, that it is able to save your soul! That's the power of the Spirit's sword. Don't underestimate it! With honesty and humility, receive the Word of God implanted within you and you'll grow strong through the battle and challenges of life and bear great fruit!

**C. Allow the Word to take root and hold it fast (Luke 8:13; Colossians 3:16; Philippians 2:14-16)**

The third guideline for using the Spirit's sword effectively is this: *Allow the Word to take root within you and hold it fast.* If you'll remember from the parable of the sower, the Word of God in the rocky soil didn't fare well.

Verse 13 of Luke, chapter 8, says this:

***13 "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.***

The Word of God in the rocky soil didn't fare well because it wasn't allowed to take root. The people heard it and were excited about it, but that was as far as it went. They didn't allow it to dwell in their hearts and minds and influence the way they were living their lives and the choices they were making.

In contrast, Paul tells us to approach the Word of God much differently than this. He describes what our relationship to the Word of God should look like in Colossians 3, verse 16. He says:

***16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.***

In this third guideline for using the Spirit's sword, I'd like to focus on the first phrase and we'll return to the rest of the verse later. ***Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you...*** What a beautiful word picture that is! Let the Word make its home within you. Let it be a part of you. Let it richly dwell within you. Don't just let it pass in one ear and out the other, but let it stay and take root and become the core of who you are.

I get the idea of meditating on it, savoring it, eating it like food to get the nutrients we need to survive and grow...not just reading it quickly and checking it off our to-do list for the day, but approaching it carefully and quietly with prayer and an open heart and mind. I think of digging deep, observing and thinking and interacting with it. When we approach God's Word in this way, taking our time and asking the Spirit to guide us, we're going to be amazed by what we find there and how relevant it is to our daily lives and challenges...we'll experience the incredible power it has to transform and free us and draw us deeper into life with God.

I had an experience in Colorado that I think will help give you a picture of what it's like to approach the Word this way and let it richly dwell within you. I lived in Fort Collins, Colorado for 2 years, from around 2000 to 2002. Now I love to hike in the mountains and one of my favorite places to go in Colorado was a place called Estes Park, a small touristy town in the Rockies near a lot of hiking trails and impressive mountains.

One beautiful fall day, when the leaves of the aspen trees were at the peak of their color, I set out on a hike near Estes Park by myself. It was around 70 degrees, perfect in my book, and a gentle breeze was blowing, making that one-of-a-kind sound that aspen leaves make. After hiking a couple miles in I decided to leave the trail and find a place to sit off the beaten path. I soon found a large rock to sit on where I could enjoy a little sun, look at the brilliant yellow leaves and listen to them blow gently in the breeze.

The time I spent on that rock stands out in my mind as one of those perfect fall moments you'd like to preserve forever...perfect temperature, amazing beauty all around, quiet conversation with God, no agenda or time constraints, and just a deep feeling of peace and contentment.

So in that perfect spot I sat quietly for quite some time, just enjoying the view, thinking, and praising God for his beautiful creation. But as I sat there quietly, a really interesting thing started happening. Animals started appearing all over the place. The animals had all become still and found a hiding place when I arrived, but when I stopped moving and became quiet for an extended period of time, it was like they forgot I was there and started going about their business. A little chipmunk appeared just a couple feet away. A bunny came out of hiding and hopped by in front of me. A bird landed nearby and started pecking the ground. A deer came out and started nibbling on things. Having sat still and quieted my mind and activity, I started seeing things I never otherwise would have seen. The world began to come alive around me.

This is how I view the way God is calling us to interact with his Word. He's calling us to stop our busyness for awhile each day and sit quietly with him, listening carefully to his voice, meditating on his Word and allowing his Spirit to bring it to life and show us how to live life with him. If we never stop the activity, quiet our minds and create space in our lives for this to happen, we're going to miss so much and we'll struggle to deepen our relationship and learn how to truly walk in his power, picking up the powerful sword he's given us. But when we do quiet down and carefully listen, God's Word will come alive to us like the world did to me on that beautiful day in Colorado. And that moment and what I learned there has stayed with me ever since. I hold fast to it because it impacted my life and perspective so deeply.

May God so transform our view of his Word that we begin to see it as the most valuable treasure we possess, something we need to hold fast and know deeply and allow to permeate to the core of our being. When we relate to the Word this way and experience the life transformation it brings, we will appear as lights in a dark world.



Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 2, verses 14 to 16:

***14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain...***

What's the key ingredient here that causes us to appear as lights in the world? We're beginning to look very different from the world around us because we're holding fast the word of life. We know that we have in the Word of God the only hope this world has to offer...we have the very word of life in a world filled with death. Let's allow it to take root within us and become the core of who we are and the guidebook by which we live our lives, and let's hold it fast like the valuable gift it is. Let's not let the worries and riches and pleasures of this life distract us from what's actually able to fulfill our deepest needs and bring us true satisfaction and fulfillment. May we treasure our special moments with God and his Word and look forward to them, rather than just viewing our Bible study time as just another thing to check off our to-do list.

**D. Do the Word of God (James 1:22-25; Luke 8:21; Luke 11:28; the house on the rock)**

The fourth guideline for using the Spirit's sword effectively is this directive from Jesus himself: *Do the Word of God*. Don't just listen carefully to it and then go your way, but rather listen to it and do what it says. That's how you use the sword of God's Word effectively. Become an effectual doer of the Word, as described in James chapter 1, verses 22 to 25:

***22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.***

If you just read God's Word, but then don't do what it says, you're deluding yourself...also known as deceiving, fooling or tricking. You may feel good about doing your daily Bible reading and checking it off your list, but if it's not sinking in to the point that you're believing and acting on it, you're playing a dirty trick on yourself. Do you like it when people make a fool of you? Or how about when you make a fool of yourself? Well that's what we're doing to ourselves when we let the Word go in one ear and out the other and never do anything about what we hear.

On the contrary, Jesus views those who hear the Word of God and do it as his own mother and his brothers and people who WILL BE blessed. In Luke 8, verse 21, we read this:

***21 But [Jesus] answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."***

And in Luke 11, verse 28, Jesus says this:

***28 ..."On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it."***

If you want to pick up the sword and use it effectively in the battle, you need to not only listen carefully, but also act on what you hear. Anything else is simply a religious game with which you're deceiving yourself.

**E. Speak, teach and sing the Word (Colossians 4:2-4; Colossians 3:16; Acts 13:48-49; the Word in Acts)**

The fifth guideline for using the Spirit's sword effectively is this: *Speak, teach and sing the Word*. We use the sword when we speak, teach and sing the Word into our lives and the lives of others. The Word of God is meant to be spoken out and shared with the world!

Returning to Paul in Colossians 3, verse 16, we read again:

***16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.***

The Word of God does it work quietly within us, but it's also meant to be spoken out and shared and shouted and sung. The Spirit's sword is not meant to remain in its sheath, but rather to be drawn out and used actively in battle. As we immerse ourselves in the Word and allow the Spirit to guide us into it and transform us through it, it will begin to flow out of us to others. We'll encourage each other with its truths. We'll use it to protect our brothers and sisters from Satan's lies. We'll long to offer the hope and life we've received with those who haven't yet come to know the Savior.

Do you remember that verse: ***Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ***? In order for faith to come, the word needs to be heard, doesn't it? It may be heard as people read it in the Bible, but it also needs to be spoken out by those who have been transformed by its power. The time for shyness and timidity is over when it comes to God's Word. As we saw last week, it has the power to bring life to dead people, to tear down lies and deception, to shine light into darkness, and to change eternal destinies...to name just a few of its powers.

We see beautifully in the book Acts what the power of God's Word can do when it's spoken out boldly and clearly. Over and over in Acts, over 33 times, we see descriptions of what happened when God's Word was spoken out boldly even in the midst of incredible opposition. The speaking and sharing of the Word is central to everything that happened in Acts, and it's how God's church grew and multiplied so quickly and powerfully. You pick up the sword and start using it effectively in battle when you begin speaking, teaching and singing the Word at every opportunity, allowing it to flow out of you to others.

#### **F. Fight the battle with the words of the Word (The temptation of Jesus)**

The sixth and final guideline to using the Spirit's sword effectively is this: *Fight the battle with the words of the Word*. No one faced a more intense hand-to-hand battle with the enemy than Jesus himself. Having fasted for 40 days in the

desert, he was then aggressively and personally tempted by Satan himself. And in this battle, Jesus shows us how to win by using the Spirit's sword. In his combat with Satan, he didn't come up with his own personal arguments and defense techniques and try to use his brain power to out-argue Satan. Instead, he simply used the very words of the Scripture. He knew the Word and he relied on it alone to win the battle.

You see Jesus walked out all the principles we've looked at today and in so doing was perfectly prepared to decisively win the battle with Satan by using the Spirit's sword. Jesus had a lifelong longing for the pure milk of the Word and knew, without a doubt, it was what he needed to survive and grow. Jesus listened carefully to the Word with honesty and humility. Jesus let the Word take root and dwell within him and held it so fast that it became a part of him. Jesus lived out the Word. He listened to it and did what it said. Jesus spoke and taught the Word boldly and clearly, no matter the opposition. He used it to bring transformation to people's lives and didn't just keep it quietly to himself. And when Jesus came into full-on, hand-to-hand combat with Satan, he was fully prepared. Against the Spirit's sword, Satan didn't have a chance and he soon left the scene until a more opportune time!

### **III. WHAT THE SWORD WILL DO**

My friends, this same powerful sword is available to each of us today, and we definitely cannot afford to leave it at home or keep it in its sheath. If we do, we'll be like our two friends in the medieval battle we described as we began today, left to defend ourselves with only a shield and unable to advance and win the battle decisively.

The Bible is full of great news about what will happen when we learn to use the Spirit's sword effectively, and I want to close today by quickly summarizing these for you. Here we go. When you learn to use the Spirit's sword, these are some of the results you will personally see:

- 1) You will bear fruit (Luke 8:15)
- 2) You will begin to speak the Word with boldness (Acts 4:31)
- 3) The Word will perform its work within you (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- 4) You will grow in your salvation (1 Peter 2:1-3)

- 5) You will be blessed (James 1:25)
- 6) You will appear as a light in a dark world (Philippians 2:14-16)
- 7) You will experience the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18)
- 8) You will build your faith (Romans 10:17)
- 9) You will go out with joy (Isaiah 55:12)
- 10) You will be led forth with peace (Isaiah 55:12)
- 11) Where thorns once flourished in your life, beautiful, healthy plants will grow (Isaiah 55:13)
- 12) The Lord will be glorified in you (Isaiah 55:13).

These are just a few of the benefits of picking up the Spirit's sword and using it to fight your battles. Are you ready to pick it up and start using it more effectively today? We live in challenging times and we can't afford to head out without the Spirit's sword!