

**The Sword of the Spirit**  
**Ephesians 6:17     June 2-3, 2018**

**Introduction**

- Do we have any golfers here today? **PP** Now, I'm not talking mini-golf...I mean 18-hole golf. I've played a handful of times, and let me tell you, I am not good. I play golf like a baseball player...which means the golf ball never, ever goes straight. And then there's like 47 different clubs you've got to know how to use, drivers, woods, irons, hybrids, wedges, and all the rest.
- My father-in-law is a great golfer. He gave me a bag of his old clubs and when I've played with them, it's like "eeny-meeny-miny-mo, ok, I'm a hundred yards out, I'll hit this 3-iron, that sounds good". And I go and hit the ball like 150 yards sideways and over the green. If you want to be a good golfer, you've got to practice with your clubs and you've got to know which clubs to use in each and every situation.
- We've been studying **Ephesians 6** and learning how spiritual warfare works in the life of the follower of Christ. Today, we're going to be looking at the last individual piece of the armor.
- For the sake of time, I'm not going to rehash in depth the pattern of spiritual warfare that the enemy follows, I would encourage you to go back and listen to the past sermons to soak that in.
  - In short, **PP** the enemy is a deceiver, and his schemes will always fall into one of 5 schemes – doubt/disbelief, disunity, discouragement, despairing hopelessness, or defiance. And those schemes are meant to steal your peace, kill your joy, and destroy your testimony. All of the enemy's attacks follow that pattern.
  - Praise God, that He has given us everything we need to stand firm against those attacks. As we walk more and more in our identity as children of God, we learn how to wear the armor He has provided us. Today we get to study the final piece of armor, which is also the singular piece of the armor that is not only defensive, but also offensive. Today, we study the sword of spirit.
- So as you turn with me to **Ephesians 6:17**, I'm going to pray.
- **Ephesians 6:17 PP** "and take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"
- We're going to briefly look at this final piece of the armor and we're just going to systematically work our way through this passage so we can learn how to wield the sword.

**Wielding the Sword**

- As with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, the first thing we need to see is that the sword of the Spirit is something that we have to take up

- “Take” (Gk. *dechomai*) **PP** literally means to lift up or pick up with the hand. The Greek grammar of this word means that it’s something that must be intentionally done, it doesn’t happen on its own.
  - Unlike the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of readiness which we “have on” and will passively do their job, the sword is not always active, it needs to be drawn and used to be effective.
  - See, the Roman Soldiers would keep their swords sheathed and strapped to their belts until it was time to enter into combat. They would sharpen the sword, clean it, and otherwise make sure it was in good condition outside of combat, but it wouldn’t be drawn from its sheath until the enemy approached.
- In the same way, the sword can be maintained and strengthened, but it won’t passively do its job when the attack comes. We’ve got to actively take it up. This means we recognize the attack when it comes and then we actively respond to the attack with the sword of the Spirit.
- So what does that response look like? **PP** Well, in the Roman legions there were two types of swords that were used...the spatha, which was a long flat sword about 2 to 3 feet long that was a purely offensive weapon, typically used by heavy infantry or cavalry, and then there was the gladius, a much shorter sword usually about 18 inches long that was used by the majority of infantry soldiers as it could be used both defensively to parry and offensively to attack.
- The Greek **PP** word for sword used here in this passage, (Gk. *machaira*) refers to the Roman gladius sword.
  - Therefore, when we take up the Sword of the Spirit it can be used to both defend from the attacks of the enemy, and to offensively attack the enemy as he comes against us.
- **James 4:7 PP** “...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”
  - When we take up the sword of the Spirit, we’re taking up the only piece of the armor that is specifically made to be both defensive and offensive and our resistance to the devil will ultimately make him flee, because the enemy certainly doesn’t like to be pierced with the truth of our Lord.
  - Now because the gladius is a short sword, it was made to be used in hand to hand combat, where its wielder would make short, precision strikes against the enemy, or would be used to quickly parry an attack and then swiftly counter-attack against the exposed foe.
  - The gladius swords were all double-edged and razor sharp at the point since it was primarily used to pierce, not to slash. If used properly, the gladius could

pierce right through an enemy's armor and land a killing blow without too much effort. The strength, sharpness, and design of the sword itself did all the work.

- How many of you know that spiritual warfare doesn't always consist of the enemy shooting arrows from a distance that we can simply lift up that shield of faith to defend against? Sometimes the enemy gets right in our face trying to beat us down, he gets right inside our thoughts and minds, or uses a person or circumstance that is very close to us to come against us in some way. How many of you have experienced that?
  - In those moments, we need to have our shield lifted up ready to deflect the blows, but its also precisely in those moments when we need to take up the double-edged sword of the Spirit to counter-attack with precision, letting the authority of the word of God do its work because of the intrinsic power resident within it.
- So what is the sword of the Spirit? How do we wield it? Well, Paul clarifies that for us here when he tells us that it is the word of God. **PP**
  - Our sword is not the Spirit Himself, though we'll discuss His importance in this in a minute. Our sword is the word of God that the Spirit uses in us and through us as He speaks truth to us.
- Now in the Greek there are actually three words for the word, "word". The first isn't even used in the bible, **PP** (Gk. *graphe*) – refers to the word in written form, or the actual collection of words in a book. So this Greek word could be used to refer to a bible.
  - As I said, this isn't used here. The bible, merely as a book that sits on our shelves, or exists as an unused app on our phones, is not a sword.
- The second Greek word used for word is (Gk. *logos*), **PP** Logos refers to the whole meaning and substance of the words that are used. The message of the entirety of the words make up the logos.
  - Logos is used in **John 1:1** to refer to Jesus Christ, **PP John 1:1, 14** "In the beginning was the Word [*logos*], and the Word [*logos*] was with God, and the Word [*logos*] was God....And the Word [*logos*] became flesh and dwelt among us..."
  - Jesus is the message of all of scripture. He is the end to which everything points. His perfect life, atoning death and resurrection, and eventual return are the core message of all of scripture.
  - And there is great power in the name of Jesus Christ all by itself. How many of you know that in the midst of the attacks from the enemy, when you don't know anything else to say or do, if we just call out to Jesus and fix our heart and mind on Him, He'll meet us in the battle. Amen.

- But guess what? *Logos* is not the word Paul uses here. While the full message of scripture is a powerful weapon in spiritual warfare, which **Hebrews 4:12** tells us is living and active and able to pierce deeply into hearts; the word Paul uses here is (Gk. *rhema*).  
**PP**
- The unique weapon that the soldier of Christ is commanded to take up is the *rhema* of God. *Rhema* refers to specific sayings or declarations. In the context of scripture, *rhema* refers to the specific truths within the *logos*.
  - If we think of the *graphe* as referring to a building, the *logos* would tell us that the building is actually an armory full of weapons, and the weapons themselves are the *rhema*. One could also think of the *logos* like a golf bag, and the *rhema* are the specific clubs inside.
  - Put a different way, **PP** as soldiers of Christ we're called to wield the specific truths of scripture in our warfare, not just speak in vague terms and generalities about the message of Christ.
- **Romans 10:17** **PP** "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word [*rhema*] of Christ."
  - Recognize that neither *graphe* nor *logos* build faith...**Hebrews 4:12** tells us that the *logos* can pierce to the heart and soul; the message of Jesus Christ will get people's attention. But **PP** it's the specific application of God's truth, His *rhema*, to your heart and mind in a specific circumstance that faith is built and you mature and grow in the Lord.
  - This is why so many Christians aren't growing in their faith; they're not taking up the *rhema* of God...they're content staring at the bible on their desk, the *graphe*, or listening to teachings on the message of the scripture, the *logos*, but they don't actually encounter God by experiencing His specific truth, the *rhema*, at work in their lives.
    - We've got to remember that the bible is a tool that is meant to let us know God more deeply; to know who He is, what He has done, and what He says to us. If we never open it up, or we sit through sermons or bible studies, say amen, and then never engage with the specific truth within it as it applies to our lives on a daily basis, our faith will not grow.
    - Wielding the sword of the Spirit means engaging with the specific truth of God in specific situations and seeing God's power be put on display so that our faith can be strengthened and we overcome the deceptions and schemes of the evil one.
- If you don't believe me, just turn over in your bible to **Matthew 4:1-11** **PP** When the devil came against Jesus in the wilderness after He had been fasting 40 days, Jesus

wielded the *rhema*. He met the three temptations of the devil with three specific swords of truth that dismantled the temptations of the enemy with precision.

- Christ had victory because He wielded the specific truth of scripture. He didn't say, "well, God loves and sent me to die for the world so you should leave now." He didn't speak in generalities about Himself – I mean Jesus is the logos incarnate – and what did Jesus do? He quoted three passages from Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy? How many of us go around quoting Deuteronomy?
- And recognize the devil quoted scripture to Jesus. You think the devil is foolish enough to go around talking about the general message of things? No, the devil uses the *rhema* too. You ever think about that? Talk about hand to hand combat.
  - If we go into a fight with the devil and meet him with general messages of scripture, you can be sure that he's going to turn right around and speak his twisted version of *rhema* to deceive us and try to mess up our understanding of truth, just like he tried to do with Jesus.
- Our hand to hand spiritual warfare must be with the specific truth of God, the *Rhema*. And I love this, the first verse that Jesus quoted to the devil, when the devil tempted Him to turn the stone to bread, was from **Deuteronomy 8:3 PP**.  
**Matthew 4:4** "But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"
- Does anyone want to take a guess as to what Greek word is used to translate the word "word" from **Deuteronomy 8:3**. What type of word are we to live by? What type of word are we to be sustained by? What type of word are we to wield in our warfare against the lies of the enemy? That's right, *rhema*, we are to live by every *rhema*, every specific saying, that comes from the mouth of our God.
- Isn't that so cool? Jesus is in the middle of spiritual warfare using the *rhema*, and He's telling the devil that as long as He relies on the *rhema* He can't be defeated. I love that. It's like Babe Ruth calling his shot. Jesus is saying, I'm going to parry your attack and stab you with this sword right here, and then Jesus stabs him three times, and the devil runs away because he can't do anything about it. Man, Jesus is awesome.
- Now, if the logos incarnate wielded the *rhema* against the devil – and proclaimed to the devil that it's by the *rhema* that we live – I think it's probably a pretty big deal that we seek to do the same thing. Amen?
- Here's the cool thing, this is the Sword of the Spirit, **PP** which means it's not our sword, it's His and we don't wield the sword of the Spirit by our power, we wield the sword of the Spirit by the power that the Spirit gives us.

- In fact, the grammatical construction of the phrase Sword of the Spirit could more literally be translated "the sword supplied by the Spirit". PP
- Zechariah 4:6 "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."
- We don't fight this warfare by our strength. The Spirit of the Lord will give us the specific *rhema* we need to parry the attack of the enemy and allow us to make the precision counter-attack in the fight.
  - I hope you've all experienced what I'm talking about, because it's those moments that build our faith. It's those moments when a specific verse is brought to mind to answer a doubt that the enemy has been placing there, it's specific truth that manifests itself in the midst of lies and deception being spoken, it's a moment when the Spirit of God makes something click for you and illuminates scripture in a new way you've never seen before that enables you to sharpen that sword even more.
- I can't tell you how often I'm in the middle of a conversation, or a counseling session, or facilitating a bible study and I have no idea what to say. So I just pause and quickly and quietly ask the Spirit of God to give me the right truth for the moment.
  - And right there, that's exactly what it means to wield sword of the Spirit: it's appealing to the leading of the Spirit to direct you to the specific truth in the moment to meet the attack of the enemy. And even when I think I know the answer, by the grace of God, I'm learning to still pause and ask Him if what I think I should say is correct.
- The Spirit is the one who equips the proper sword, PP we're simply called to take it up in the moment of battle and let the power of the Spirit wield it through us...His power fights the battle, we're simply the conduit through which that power flows as the battle is fought.
- Now, here's the catch to all this, having a bible, the *graphe*, sitting in your bedroom, or knowing the general message, the *logos*, of scripture isn't enough if we don't have the *rhema* of God hidden in our hearts and minds.
- If we appeal to the Spirit of God without having done the hard work of sharpening the sword before battle, of making sure its in good condition and ready for combat, we'll go to reach for a weapon that isn't there. An armory does no good if it has no weapons in it.
- While the Spirit of God will provide the right weapon in the specific moment, its our responsibility to make sure He has lots of different swords to choose from.

- Do we have any people here who are good with your hands? Any do-it-yourselfers? How about handy-man, construction types? How about artists and painters? Anyone who does a bunch of yardwork or gardening? Do we have any tree trimmers here? How about plumbers or electricians? Any roofers? Any musicians here? We've got many people who do many different things with their hands and every single one of those things requires specific tools for the job. And no single tool can be used to do all those things. There are some pretty versatile tools out there, but we'll become more effective in the work we're doing the more proficient we become with the specialized tools used for the task.
- Wielding the *rhema* of God operates the same way, and the only way to become more proficient with wielding the sword is studying and memorizing scripture. **PP** Read it, listen to it taught, meditate upon it, make memorizing it a priority...and then talk about it and practice wielding it. That's the only way to add swords to the armory. That's it. There is no other way. Pastor Tim always says that the more you mark up your bible the more it will mark you up. Highlight and circle, underline and write notes in the margins. Do whatever you have to do to help get the word of God deep down into your heart and mind.
  - Now, right now the enemy is attacking some of you and saying you don't memorize things well, that you can't do that. You know what, that's a load of malarkey. Toss that lie aside, don't fall into that pathetic excuse. **(Luke 18:27)** You can memorize the things that are important to you that the Lord leads you to because He will give you the power to do it. Remember it's His strength and His power. Our job is to obediently, diligently, and with discipline continually seek to add weapons to the armory.
    - Sometimes that means memorizing a passage word for word. Sometimes that means learning a parable or a teaching, it may not be verbatim, but it's pretty close. Sometimes that means learning where a verse is in scripture that you can quickly go to, but that you don't necessarily know word for word.
    - Start with finding a verse that has specific meaning to you, that the Spirit of God uses to speak to you....and work on memorizing it. Read it every day when you wake up and before you go to bed. Write it out, listen to it on your phone. Start practicing reciting it when you drive around. Eventually, as you work at it I guarantee you that you will memorize it. And when you do praise God for the victory He's given you and move on to the next sword that the Spirit leads you to add to the armory.



- The key is that we seek out swords to add the armory, so that when the attack comes the Holy Spirit can come along and bring to mind exactly what needs to be brought to bear in that moment to parry the attack of the enemy and then pierce him with the truth of our God and send him fleeing.

## Conclusion

- And this brings us back to our golfers with all those clubs. Jordan Spieth is one of the best golfers playing right now. Apart from his great talent, one of the tremendous advantages Spieth has is his caddy PP...the guy who carries his golf bag. His caddy often makes recommendations to him as to which club to use to hit a specific shot. And his caddy will also evaluate the situation and give him the proper distance and conditions in which to hit the shot.
- At the Masters in April of this year, this was on full display when the television cameras caught a conversation between the two where Spieth was going to use one club and then his Caddie convinced him to use another. Spieth took the advice of his caddie and made it to the green in two shots on a par 5 with an amazing opportunity to eagle the hole.
- Similarly, in 2017, Spieth's caddie was able to estimate the distance to the hole in a crucial moment at the Open that allowed Spieth to figure out which club to use and hit the perfect shot to go on and win the tournament.
- Jordan Spieth is an amazing golfer, but without his caddie telling him which club to use or what the conditions are, Spieth would have no idea how to attack the course he's playing.
- Praise God that we have the greatest caddie in the world carrying around our bag of swords. PP The Holy Spirit knows exactly which sword to use in each moment, He knows exactly how to counter the blows of the enemy, and speak a specific truth into the lies that will pierce the devil's schemes and make him flee.
- Our job, by the grace of God, is to keep filling out bag with swords, keep filling our quiver with arrows, keep filling our toolbelt with different tools that can be used in whatever circumstance we find ourselves.
- By the grace God, let's dig into the specific truths of scripture, learning them, memorizing them, meditating upon them so that we'll all have a very full bag of sharp swords ready for the warfare that comes....that we may live by the word of Christ. Amen. Amen.