**20200712\_TheSwordoftheSpirit**

Good morning, fellowship, community, church, family. It's great to be seen by you. That's what I say, because all I'm looking at is a camera and some talented technical people, but I do appreciate you tuning in this morning and it's a privilege to be able to share God's word with you today. We're going to be looking at Ephesians chapter six, continuing in our series on the invisible.

War. And as has already been mentioned by Ben and also Mike, we're going to focus on the armor of God, particularly the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Question one, a Corona virus first swooped in upon us. What was that one basic household life commodity that suddenly fell into short supply.

Do you remember? I know you remember toilet paper, right? It was hard to get. I can't explain it. I'll never understand it, but you suddenly had to wait in line stores. Didn't have it. It quantities were living. It was, it was crazy. And it's amazing how, when something normally available in abundance gets scarce or hard to find how much more we come to appreciate it.

Right. So here's another question which may sound sort of strange. If this book, the Bible cable suddenly fell into short supply in their only limited ways to get your hands on a copy. To what extent would you go to get one? And I know that's hard to imagine because the Bible is so readily available, so easy to get ahold of either in paper like this or online electronically, or even pull it up on your smartphone.

It's hard to imagine a famine for the week word of God, but prior to March, it was pretty hard to imagine a famine for toilet paper as well. Right. The prophet Amos predicted a day in which God's word would fall into short supply, there would be a famine for the word of God. He wrote the days are coming declares.

The sovereign Lord, when I will say the famine throughout the land, not a famine of food, food, or a thirst for water, but a famine for hearing the words of the Lord. Now I know Amos was talking about the exile of God's people, punishment for their disobedience when he spoke of this famine for hearing the words of God.

But I wonder if that is scription is not also appropriate to today when even, even to our churches, when God's word the Bible more readily available now than at any previous time in the history of the universe. Is nonetheless ignored or put on the back burner even by Christ followers. Is it possible that our world's experiencing a self-induced famine for God's word for reading it for treasuring it for building our lives upon it, like having so much TP at our disposal until suddenly we don't.

Well, our study in the V in the invisible war today focuses on that component of the armor of God and Ephesians six, the one component of the Christian's armor, that's not entirely invisible. You can actually hold it, take it in your hands. You can use it. It's the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

Our text verse 17 from Ephesians six and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit. Which is the word of God. And what I want to do is ask and attempt to answer three questions today. What is the sword of the spirit? What is the purpose of the sword of the spirit? And then finally, how, what does it mean to take the sword of the spirit?

So what is the sword of the spirit? Will Paul answers that for us? He says, it's the word of God? So what is the word of God? Whatever God has spoken his truth by whatever means he chooses to speak it. But primarily it is the written record of what God has said and done. It's the scriptures inspired by the Holy spirit, recognized by God's people and utilized by God's church, the Bible, and this phrase, the word of God is used synonymously.

With the scriptures. In fact, we continue to say today, the Bible is the word of God. This is the sword of the spirit. Now God has spoken in many ways through angelic messengers, dreams and visions, audible voices, he speaks through the inner conscience. The beauty of creation is his expresses his truth, prophetic announcements among other ways, but to communicate.

To watch through a written record was a stroke of pure brilliance on God's part. This is the most effective means of community. CADing his truth. And I want to say that for the following reasons, three piece first precision, the precision with which his truth could be expressed and record it and remembered the voice of conscience, for example, is not nearly so precise.

But thou shalt not is quite clear. The second P is, is propagation. The possibility of propagating his truth all over the world, to all people in all times an angelic message or is limited in what the angelic messenger can say and how many people he can reach. But God's word is, is, is an excellent form of.

Propagating God's truth to the ends of the earth. And the third P is preservation the preservation of God truth in a written form. So that would not be forgotten, but preserved for people of all generations. And that's much preferable to a short, uh, to, uh, to my, to my memory, as they say, a short pencil is better than a long memory.

God's spirit has done three things and giving us this sword of the spirit. The first thing he did was to inspire it. Inspiration is the guiding of the house, human authors by God's spirit. So that what they wrote is the very words of God. The spirit also oversaw the process of canonization. Now that's as simply means that he led God's people to recognize those writings, which he himself had inspired.

And then finally, over the millennia, the spirit has also overseen the process of translation and transmission guiding the preservation of his word so that it comes today to us in this format. With authenticity and full authority, but here's a bonus. The spirit is continuing to do something with this word.

This is illumination. That's a bonus for us continues even today to speak to us through this word so that you and I today through this book, hear God's voice. Just as clearly as the children of Israel did when they heard God's voice booming, audibly from Mount Sinai. So as a result of the Spirit's work of inspiring and propagating and preserving this book, God's word, the Bible, it continue in use to speak today.

It remains as described by the author of Hebrews living. Alive and active. And as Peter described it in his epistle, the living and enduring word of God, people, this book is a treasure of incalculable value. If you were to undertake a study of those topics, that I've just mentioned inspiration and canonization and preservation, you, you would come away in all of God who has spoken and you would come over way.

Treasuring the book. Through which he has and continues to speak today. You know, there's only one thing you can hold in your hand today that you will also hold in eternity and it's not your smartphone. It's not your car, your jewelry, or any other possession, no matter how priceless it's God's word, Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away, but my word will never pass away.

This is a book. Do you treasure this book?

Of all the things that I own, that I can physically hold in my hands, whether it's my house, my cars, my RV, my tools, even my guitars, whatever I could name this book is the most precious of all possessions. And I would never ever give it up. Fortunately, I've never been in a place. Where I had two other brothers and sisters, Christians around the world have not been so fortunate.

My greatest passion as a pastor is that I could encourage those who sit under my ministry to embrace this value, this book, treasure it, and build their lives upon it. I don't say I don't love this book because I'm a pastor. I love this book because I'm a Christ follower. The title pastor, I will soon put aside.

But this is God's word that he's eternal. This is a treasure. This is gold. Sama says more precious than the finest gold. So our second question then is what is the purpose of the sword of the spirit? I want you to listen closely and follow me here. The sword of the spirit, the purpose of the sword of the spirit.

It's not about us fighting God's battles. But it's about us hearing God's voice and being shaped by his truth so that we can stand firm in the faith. Now, some of you might not be happy with that. Now you were so excited to get to this piece of the armor. Finally, a piece of the armor with which I can go on the offensive and you were like, letting me add him.

I want to get out there and fight God's battles. Pulverized, those infidels. Run through those atheist, shout down those theological liberals destroy. Those demons do battle with God's enemies. Finally, an offensive weapon, which I can go out and go on the attack. Let me add them. I'm going to wheel this sword and they'll never mess with me again.

I hate to tell you about the sword of the spirit is not so that we can go on the attack against God's enemies. Here's three reasons why I say that first, every part of the armor in Ephesians chapter six, every part of the armor in this passage is specifically described as being all about standing firm, not going on to attack review some of the verses that are in this section, verse 11, put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand.

Against the devil schemes, verse 13, put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground verse 14, stand firm. Then do you read anything in this passage that suggests that you are, I should go on the warpath for God. God does not need me to fight his battles. He's calling me and you to stand our ground in the battle that is being waged against us.

And the reason this battle is being waged against us is that Christ has already won the battle. So going after God's people is all that the devil has left. You are not you and I are not called to fight him or engage him in combat. We are called to stand firm. In the faith against the devil schemes, the sword of the spirit, the word of God allows us to do that.

Here's the second reason that the, the, the, the sword of the spirit is not about going on the warpath for God, though. The word of God is called the spirit sword, not my sword, not your sword. It's the sword of the spirit. I think this is important for us to remember. It's the Spirit's book. It comes from him.

It's inspired by him. It's empowered by him. And the truth is unless I am filled with his spirit, I'm only going to wreak havoc by attempting to wield the sword apart from his power and his enabling. I've seen guys arguing the fine points of theology. They were getting hot and argumentative, and I realized this was.

Using the sword of the spirit without the Spirit's presence or the spirits piece, it was a, a genuine, genuinely ugly fiasco attempting to wield the spirit without the spirits enabling makes us quite like Peter in the garden of guessed Semini who literally pulled out his sword and was swinging it wildly under the control of the flesh, not the spirit put away your sword.

Jesus commanded. Peter. This is not our sword. You're just the spirit sword. The third reason that we're not called to go on the offensive with the, with the scriptures, but to stand firm. Is that not all, but most of the invisible war takes place inside of me. Not outside there, not somewhere out there. It's taken place right here in my mind.

And in my heart, in your mind, in your heart, that's where the. Battle is going to be waged. This is why God is calling us to fill our hearts and minds with this truth. That is how we will stand firm against the forces of evil. These, uh, the battles take place. Mostly in my mind, you may have experienced this too.

I know that I'm struggling against anger and resentment. When I start having conversations in my mind with. The people out there that I think are the source of my problems. Have you ever done that? I'm really good at arguing with people that are in my mind. And I know when that happens, that I'm in a battle right here and right here,

I need God's word in that moment. The sword of the spirit needs to do its work inside of me. That's where so much of the invisible war takes place. And that's where I need to learn to stand my ground to put it another way. What I'm saying is I believe the word of God as the sword of the spirit is more about what God wants to do in me than through me.

It's more about what he wants to do in you then through you. And what does he want to do when us, he wants to shape us through this truth. He wants to shape us through, through, through, through the contents of this word, saturating our minds and transforming us through that. So that's the purpose of the sword of the spirit to enable us to stand up firm in our faith.

So that brings us to our third question. What does it mean when Paul says take the sword of the spirit? And this is where I hope we will be able to really get practical and put this to work in our lives. What does it mean to take the sword of the spirit? The passage clap tells us, take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit.

The word take is an imperative. It's a command. So Paul seriously wants us to take ownership of this sword and make it useful full in our lives, but he doesn't elaborate on what that means or how to do it. Now the word take is a very common word, both in English and in new Testament, Greek. And it's got a large variety of meanings, but the idea is generally to take or receive something in such a way as to make it your own.

Make it a part of you. It's interestingly, the same word take he used here is used in other places to mean welcoming guests. Into your home, taking them into your home, welcoming those who come under your roof, embrace them, take them in, treat them like family, receive them. So too, I think we are to take the sword of the spirit to receive it, to make it part of who we are to welcome it into our lives, to make it family.

In other words, don't be a stranger. To the word of God. Now there's two essential ways that I think you and I are to take the sword of the spirit and bring it welcomed into our lives. Here's here's the first one. It's the regular and systematic reading and meditating on scripture. So as to be constantly saturated and shaped by God's truth, I know that's a mouthful, you know, the most important thing you or I can do.

To grow spiritually, no matter where we are in our spiritual lives, whether just starting out or seasoned believers is to read the Bible and think about what it means for my life. And that's why the Bible speaks so regularly about the scriptures truth and making it our own by meditating on it. Day and night.

So this gives us us as we read it day in and day out and meditate on it and think about how, what it means for our, a life. As we cultivate this habit, building our lives on scripture, we get a foundation on which to live our lives lives, your life needs a foundation, and it needs to be the word of God.

You're going to have a foundation make no mistake about that, of one sort or another. Well, it will it be a foundation of rock. Or a foundation of sand. Will it stand the times or will it give way God's word? Is that rock? That foundation for our lives. Will your foundation be God's word or will it be something else?

Will it be the shifting sands of culture? Whichever way the winds of culture happened to be blowing? Will it be the opinions of your political party? Will it, will it be what you, what you absorb through social media? You will have a foundation. Everyone does for the believer, the foundation of our lives needs to be the word of God.

Very something very interesting. I was thinking about, do you realize that through every stage of the Bible's history of redemption from beginning to end from Genesis to revelation from ancient history to the present day, God's people through all of those errors and epics have been called to build their lives on God's word.

Let me take you on a whirlwind tour through the entire Bible. To illustrate this to you. Let's start with Moses and the children of Israel. Moses said to them through these commandments that I give you to Derrick him be upon your hearts, impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads, write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your Gates.

Moving forward. Joshua takes over for Moses just to go and conquer the promised land. God tells Joshua, this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on a day and night. Then you will have prosperity and success go to the, the period of the judges, the whole book of judges about how God's people put his word, his truth aside, and instead suffered because everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

They were building on the wrong foundation. Come to the King, the kingdom period, you know, every King of Israel was supposed to take God's word and copy it for himself. Make his own personal handwritten copy. This is laid out for us in Deuteronomy 17. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he's the right for himself on a scroll, a copy of the law.

It is to be with him and he is read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to Revere the Lord, his God and follow carefully. All the words. Of this law and these decrees, and when Kings followed God's word, the nation of Israel, the nation of Judah, they prospered. And when they didn't, the whole country went downhill, eventually leading to exile after the exile God's punishment, where he led his people into captivity for 70 years as, or brought a group back in Ezra, the scripture says devoted himself to the scripture to teaching it and explaining it to the people.

Oh, we forgot the writings, the Psalms and Proverbs. David wrote blessed is the man who meditates on God's word day and night. He wrote I've hidden your word in my heart so that I won't sin against you. That's from Psalm one 19 plus 107 71 other verses in that chapter where he talks about how wonderful it is to have God's word Proverbs.

Mmm. My son listened to your father's instruction and don't forsake my teaching. Uh, we come to the, the prophets there. We're calling God's people back to God's word to obey it, to listen to it. Otherwise punishment was coming. I already mentioned the exile. Let's transition into the new Testament. Jesus comes on the scene and he says that he came to fulfill the law, not to abolish it.

Yeah, he, he, he, he quoted it. He obeyed it. He affirmed that the greatest commandment in the law is the love the Lord, your God, with all your heart. A second greatest to love your neighbor as yourself. He built his life on the scripture. He affirmed the eternity of God's truth. You said of heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pay pass away.

He told us to make his word, the foundation of our lives. He who hears these words, words of mine and puts them into practice is like a man who built his house on a rock transitioned to the book of Exodus, the apostle. He said, we will give our attention to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Jumped to the epistles.

Paul tells Timothy all scripture is God breathed and useful Hebrew. The author of Hebrews says the word of God is alive and active. Our text today, take the word, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. You potentially come to them. Book of revelation, the last book, and it says blessed is the one who reads aloud.

The words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart. What is written in it? You get the picture. In our whirlwind tour throughout every stage of this biblical narrative, a life saturated by the word of God was, and still is essential to God's people. This book is the foundation we need for our lives through regular and repeated reading and meditating until it becomes a part of who we are and essential component of our very existence.

Listen, we do not stand firm in our faith by getting a Jesus tattoo. Or putting a cross on a gold chain around our neck. We stand firm in our faith by what we do each and every day, day in and day out building our lives on the scripture. That's what it means to take the sword of the spirit, to make it your own, to welcome it into your life.

You stand firm by what you do each and every day. So the other day I broke out singing a TV commercial jingle from the 1970s. I really don't know why it was a commercial for Drake's devil. She can still buy them. The last line of the jingle went like this. I love devil dogs more than Marsha. My family looked at me strangely, which is not an uncommon occurrence.

In fact, Nancy then pulled up that very commercial on YouTube. It was a great time. I love that. Why was that commercial from 40 some years ago? Stuck in my head because I watched TV too much, I guess before from X, I heard it over and over and through repetition, that, that song stuck in my head where it remains.

Decades later. And that is what we want with God's word. We want to take the sword of the spirit so that it becomes part of us in there in car strictly unalterably, a part of our very being. And this only happens by opening it up, hearing it, reading it, letting God speak to us through it, making it a part of who we are.

That is what Paul means when he says in Romans. 12 be transformed by the renewing of your mind. All right. Here's the second way that we take the sword of the spirit, not just regular and repeated reading and meditating on it, but, but here's another one that I think is really important hearing from God personalized messages.

For me, personalized messages for you that speak his truth to us. In our moment of need now because the scripture is alive and active and because God's spirit lives in us, we can expect that he can and will use his word to speak to us in uniquely personalized and relevant ways. Now, I'm not talking about emotional experiences per se, but I'm talking about a verse of scripture that sometimes will jump off the page and stuff two way that I know God put that in there for me.

And is speaking to me, throw it. Maybe you've heard believers say, God really spoke to me. That may sound somewhat sensational, but I do believe that there are specific issues, attacks and needs through which God's truth words from God's specific portions of scripture and will address us and help us in a specific moment of need the scripture speak to us in this way.

Lately, I've personalized these words from Jesus, because I've really needed them as a word from, to me. Yes. It's when he's talking about not wearing. And he talks about God's provision for the birds of the air, and he says to me, you are worth more than many sparrows. You said, take a lesson from the birds there.

They're not worried. They're cared for by God. He's providing for them. Guess what? Even the even greater way he cares for you loves you. He values you. He likes you. You're worth more than many sparrows in that verse has become for me in recent months. God's special word too. Me and in a moment of feeling small feeling as pastor Mark calls it a less than feeling woefully mediocre allows the parent a disappointingly average human being ready to die and be remembered by no one.

When I read jesus' words, you are worth more than many sparrows. And I know he's talking to me. I know he's talking to you too. But the spirit enables God's truth to be personalized to us in a relevant way, in a real and personalized way. But how is God going to do that? If you and I don't open it up and read it and fill our mind with it and let him speak to us in our moment of need in that personalized and relevant way,

we need to be people of the book. That's the sword of the spirit. So the wrap up today, let me wrap up with the same question with which we began, and then I want to share one short story. Here's the question. If like toilet paper during the Corona virus crisis, God's word were to fall into short supply.

To what extent would you go? To get your hands on the Bible to open it up, to read it and to build your life upon it. More importantly is the question. Will you take the necessary steps now to do just that so that in your heart, there is no famine for hearing the words of God. And so the story, uh, Ravi Zacharias, a great Christian apologist author speaker.

He passed away recently, it was met in may I believe of this year. He told an amazing story of a man named hen farm who had served as Robbie's translator in Vietnam many years ago. Um, I want to read a portion of this story, just a few paragraphs. You can look it up online yourself. If you want to hear the full story.

But I think it's powerful and I didn't bring my glasses. I can read this. Okay. Shortly after Vietnam, this is how Ravi told the story. Shortly after Vietnam fell to the communist, hon hen was arrested, accused of aiding and a baiting, the Americans. He was in and out of prison for several years during one long jail term.

The sole purpose of his jailers was to doctrinated him against the West and especially against democratic ideals and the Christian faith he was in. And he was cut off from reading anything thing in English and restricted, the communist propaganda in French or Vietnamese hen and to buckle under the onslaught.

Maybe he thought I have been lied to, maybe God does not exist. Maybe my whole life has been governed by lies. Maybe the West has deceived me the more he thought and the more he, he, he moved, the more he moved toward a decision. Finally, he made up his mind. He determined that when he awakened the next day, he would not pray anymore or ever think of his Christian faith.

Again. The next morning he was assigned to clean the latrines of the prison. It was the most dreaded chore shunned by everyone. And so with much distress, he began the awful task. As he, as he cleaned out, a tin can filled to overflowing with toilet paper. His eye caught what he thought was English printed on a piece of paper.

He hardly washed it off and slipped it into his hip pocket planning to read it at night, not having seen anything in English for a long time. He anxiously wanted waited for a free moment under the mosquito net that night after his roommates had fallen asleep, he pulled out his small flashlight. And, and shining it onto the damp piece of paper he read at the top corner, Romans chapter eight, literally trembling with shock.

He began to read, and we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him. What shall we say then in response to this, if God is for us, who can be against us? What shall shits separate us from the love of God shelf, trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors him who loved us, hin wept. He knew his Bible and he had not seen one for so long now, not only that. He knew that there was not a more relevant passage of conviction and strength for one on the verge of surrendering to the three of evil. I cried out to God asking for forgiveness four.

He was to have four. This was to have been the first date in years that he had determined not to, to pray. Evidently the Lord had other plans. The next day he N asked the camp commander, if he could clean the latrine again,

he confirmed with this chore on a regular basis because he had discovered that some official in the camp was using a Bible as toilet paper. Finally each day, Ken picked up a portion of the scripture and cleaned it off and added it to his nightly devotional reading in this way. He retrieved a significant portion of the Bible.

I see two things here that amazed me. First is God using his word in a personalized, relevant way to speak to Ken in his moment of need. That's what the spirit is going to do with this book in your life too. But another thing for hen farm, the sort taking the sword of the spirit meant volunteering for latrine duty.

Cleaning human feces off the crumpled pages of the Bible and pouring over them in the dark hours of the night after everyone else had fallen asleep. Why did he do this?

Could saturate his heart and mind with God's truth so that he could hear God's voice speak to him personally. And so that he could stand firm. In his faith in the most trying of circumstances. So the question is to what extent do you, and I need to go to join hen FOM in taking the sword of the spirit and building our lives on it's truth.

Let's pray together. I thank you God for this treasure. And my prayer is that I, and those who hear me today would take whatever steps are necessary to build our lives on this foundation and to treasure it above all things. We thank you today for your word, for your love, for your truth in Christ's name.

Amen. Thanks for tuning in today. Everybody want to send you off with this Ben Ben addiction, which you may be familiar now. Go in peace to love, serve and enjoy the Lord. Bye.