

**Series: Standing Firm
“God’s Word is the Sword”
Ephesians 6:17b**

Big Idea – Great tragedy is that so many Bible believing Christians don’t know the Bible they say they believe.

Illustration – the Roman sword was anything from a 6” dagger to an 18” sword, worn in a sheath or scabbard on the belt of the soldier. It was a precise weapon used precisely for hand to hand combat.

Peter tried to use a sword to defend Jesus in the Garden (Luke 22:47-51); but he learned at Pentecost that the "sword of the Spirit" does a much better job. Moses also tried to conquer with a physical sword (Ex. 2:11-15), only to discover that God's Word alone was more than enough to defeat Egypt.

A material sword pierces the body, but the Word of God pierces the heart.

1. The Source of the Spiritual Sword

Need a “spiritual sword” to fight against spiritual enemies in a spiritual warfare.

It’s the sword given by the Spirit of God to believers:

God’s Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, helps us understand it – unbelievers cannot – they might have a Bible, but has no ability to understand things of God

1 Corinthians 2:14 “A person who does not have the Spirit does not accept the truths that come from the Spirit of God. That person thinks they are foolish and cannot understand them because they must be spiritually discerned.”

The sword becomes ours when we become believers – it’s all about knowing how to use it – learning how to use it depends on how diligently you get involved in studying the Word of God.

Here is why you should from the Old Testament scriptures:

Psalms 19:7 “The instructions of the LORD are perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

8 The commandments of the LORD are right, bringing joy to the heart. The

commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight for living.

9 Reverence for the LORD is pure, lasting forever. The laws of the LORD are true; each one is fair.

10 They are more desirable than gold, even the finest gold. They are sweeter than honey, even honey dripping from the comb.

11 They are a warning to your servant, a great reward for those who obey them.”

2. The Supernatural Power of the Sword

Nothing can withstand it when it's wielded by a righteous soldier who knows how to use it.

Salvation:

Romans 1:16 “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is the power God uses to save everyone who believes—to save the Jews first, and also to save those who are not Jews.”

Judgment:

Hebrews 4:12 “God's word is alive and working and is sharper than a double-edged sword. It cuts all the way into us, where the soul and the spirit are joined, to the center of our joints and bones. And it judges (is a discerner of) the thoughts and feelings in our hearts.”

The word “discerner” is Greek word “*krino*” meaning “to judge by sifting out the evidence” The Word of God becomes what judges people – it sifts and weighs their lives in the balance of the authority of the Word to show them the reality of their sinfulness.

It's a Powerful Weapon! – It can bring truth into error, happiness into sadness and light into darkness. It changes sorrow into joy, stagnation into growth and the immature into mature. This is what we hold in our hands – the sword of the Spirit.

3. The Strategic use of the Sword

A sword is used as much to parry a blow as to inflict one.

Defensively

Jesus Christ's example when tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

In Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus used a specific scripture exactly suited to the three specific temptations of Satan. He used it in a precise way – did not flail His sword around wildly.

We too must be able like Jesus Christ to defend ourselves at whatever angle the temptation comes from. Many Christians own Bibles, and even read them, but don't know the principles to stop the attacks of the devil.

To use the Bible as a defensive weapon one must learn how to apply the specifics of the Word of God, the specific verse to the point of temptation.

That's what the psalmist means in Psalm 119:9, 11

Psalm 119:9 "How can a young person live a pure life? By obeying your word.
11 Your Word I have hidden in my heart (memorized) that I might not sin against You."

The "word" of God here in vs Eph. 6:17 is an interesting Greek word. Not "*logos*" which is a term referring to a broad or general word. Rather, it's "*rhema*" which is a specific statement or declaration.

So the "Sword of the Spirit" refers to the specific statements of God. You need to learn the totality of the Word so you can know the specific principles. You need specific principles of Scripture to deal with specific temptations or attacks.

Offensively

Examples: every time you give the Gospel to a lost soul; every time you see someone redeemed or saved; when you teach it to your children, when you talk about it with your friends, co-workers, or fellow students, or whenever you stand up and teach it – you're using it as an offensive weapon.

Satan's efforts to stop its effectiveness – Matthew 13:1-23, parable of sower and the seed. The seed is the Word of God, and Satan knows it's effective so what does he do? Anything and everything to prevent it:

1. Seeds that fell "by the wayside" – Satan and demons snatch it out of the mind so person won't remember what he heard. (vs. 4/19)
2. Seeds that "fell upon stony places" refers to persecution, trials or troubles – under pressure of those some bail out and walk away. (vs. 5,6/20,21)

3. Seeds that “fell among thorns” are people who believe for awhile but are overwhelmed by “the cares of this world” or “the deceitfulness of riches” so they walk away from the Word.

Satan wants to stop the sowing of seed because he knows that if it finds good ground it will produce fruit many times over. (v.8)

Offensive use must be specific – if you’re in a conversation and need to say what the Bible says on a certain subject, like, let’s say “gender”, you have to KNOW it.

That’s why Paul told Timothy, his son in the faith/ministry:

2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is useful for teaching, for showing people what is wrong in their lives, for correcting faults, and for teaching how to live right.

17 Using the Scriptures, the person who serves God will be capable, having all that is needed to do every good work.”

1 Peter 3:15 “But respect Christ as the holy Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have, 16 but answer in a gentle way and with respect. Keep a clear conscience so that those who speak evil of your good life in Christ will be made ashamed.”

If you don’t know the Word, you can’t use it to defend yourself, or as an offensive weapon.

Just because you own a Bible doesn’t mean you have a sword! You have to be able to use it both offensively and defensively. Remember what Jesus said in Luke 10:26 “What does the Scripture say?”

Great tragedy is that so many Bible believing Christians don’t know the Bible they say they believe.

It’s essential that the Word of God be known if we’re going to win the battle.

Are you a butterfly, a botanist or a bee?

The late H.P. Barker, a master of illustration, described three things he saw in a garden among the plants and flowers: "First, I saw a butterfly. It was beautiful. It would alight on a flower, sit for a second or two, then flutter to another, sit for a second or two, then flutter on to another, and so on. It would touch as many lovely blossoms as it could, but derived absolutely no benefit from them.

Then I watched a little longer out my window and there came a botanist with a big notebook under his arm and a magnifying glass. He would lean over a certain flower and look for a long time and then write notes in his notebook. After writing notes for hours, he closed his notebook, stuck it under his arm, tucked his magnifying glass in his pocket and walked away.

The third thing I noticed was a little bee.

The bee would light on a flower and sink down deep into it, extracting all the pollen that it could carry. It always went in empty and came out full."

Then H.P. Barker said, "So it is with people who approach the Bible. There are the spiritual butterflies who just flutter from lovely sermon to lovely sermon, from class to class, fluttering here, fluttering there, bringing nothing and gaining nothing but a nice feeling.

Then there are the spiritual botanists who take copious notes but don't have the capacity to draw anything out of the flowers - it's pure academics. Then there are the spiritual bees who draw out of every precious flower all that is there to make the honey that makes them so blessed to those around them."

What about you? Are you a *spiritual butterfly*, fluttering from class to class? Or are you a *ritual botanist* with enough notebooks to sink a small battleship? Or are you a *spiritual bee*, coming in empty and going out full? The sword is available; are you using it as a weapon to win the victory that's already ours in Jesus Christ?

