

Ephesians 6:17b

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[0:00] So we're back, just in Ephesians 6, we're not going to spend a great deal of time in this passage. Let me read to you where we've got to.

Verse 16, in all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, which we looked at two weeks ago, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

So five pieces of armor so far. We've seen when Paul is in prison, it's possible there's a Roman soldier there. But I think more likely to be in the mind is those descriptions of armor that we find in Isaiah.

Paul is borrowing the imagery from the Old Testament. So he begins by describing a belt of truth and a breastplate of righteousness. Shoes that would enable a soldier to stand firm but also to move.

In gospel ways. And then the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. They are not bits of armor that you would wear all the time. They're the bits of armor that if you were off duty you would set them down.

[1:15] And items that would need to be taken up when you're on duty. And now the sixth one, the sword of the Spirit. I think this is probably where the armor of the Lord's theme finishes.

So we may carry on next week with one more. And this is a sword both defensive, it's a weapon like a shield. But there's something here for the first time.

It's the first description of an offensive weapon. And so Paul is out suggesting in this final piece, the sword of the Spirit. That there is an offensive element. That it's the responsibility on our part to go after the evil one.

And to use it as an offensive weapon. That verse, resist the devil and he will flee from you. And the devil's strategy as we've seen is constantly to frighten us.

To terrify us. To paralyze us. To make us feel and think to be unhappy. And hopeless and despairing. And this weapon, the sword of the Spirit.

[2:18] The sword that the Holy Spirit employs. The sword of the Spirit. And which the Spirit provides. Well of course you know this don't you? It is the Word of God. It is the Bible.

He's talking about the Scriptures. And how we're to use the Scriptures. How we're to use the Word of God. And to resist the devil. To make him flee. To make him run away.

And of course as you look through the Bible. There are some really vivid and extraordinary examples. Of that. How people have done that in the Scripture.

The one that comes to mind is the temptation narrative. Isn't it? In Matthew chapter 4. Or Luke chapter 4. And so as I told you. Do you remember the context? It comes immediately after the baptism of Jesus.

Jesus is baptised. He's baptised with John's baptism of repentance. And people have gone into the water. It was a picture of their sins being washed away.

[3:17] And so why should the Son of God identify himself with a ritual. With a symbolic act of repentance.

Why should Jesus be baptised for the repentance of sins? He is sinless. He has nothing to repent of. And the answer is.

As you know. He is identifying himself with us. He is becoming our substitute. He's becoming the sin bearer. He's identifying himself with our plight and our need.

It was one of those occasions wasn't it? When the Father comes and he speaks. And the Holy Spirit comes in the form of a dove. And he descends upon the Lord Jesus.

And the Father says. This is my Son. I love you. And those words were meant to be heard in the first instance. By Jesus.

[4 : 15] Rather than by John and the disciples. Jesus in his incarnation. In his taking on human flesh and blood.

Requires to be comforted and encouraged and assured. As you do in your flesh and blood. How did the Lord Jesus in his incarnate mind.

How did he know who he was. Or what his mission would be. And the answer is this. By the Holy Spirit. And by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit.

And by the assurance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would give that to him. And here is a really vital moment. Here is an important moment in the life of Jesus.

Because from here. He steps into the limelight. He will take a journey that in three years time. Will lead to crucifixion in Jerusalem. He's been preparing for 30 years.

[5 : 12] He's been reading and praying. And searching the will of his heavenly father. And as he takes on the role publicly. Of our mediator and our saviour. And that his baptism is the point of identification.

This external stepping out. If we can put it like that. That is that by the power of the Holy Spirit. He will accomplish the task the father has given to him.

And the devil realises the importance of this moment. But it's not the devil who initiates the confrontation. Is it? Do you remember from the Bible reading? It's very clear.

He was driven by the Spirit. Capital S. Into the wilderness. Into a wilderness. Not into a garden. Not into Eden. And not into paradise. Because he has come into the fallen wilderness. That is our current existence.

[6 : 15] And the threefold temptation takes place. Do you remember? Jesus has been fasting for 40 days. And for 40 nights. I have no idea how he did that.

I'm grumpy if I miss lunch. By 5 o'clock I'm irritable. But we find that on those days of fasting. Everything about me. Comes to a kind of grinding halt.

About 3 in the afternoon. 40 days and 40 nights. And we must think. Well Jesus. Well he's the son of God. So it was okay for him. Obviously he had kind of superpowers.

That he had a divine nature. That somehow. It meant that fasting. Well it was obviously much easier for Jesus. That is a real misunderstanding. Because he is fully God.

And he is also fully man. He's a man who requires nutrition. And oxygen. And water. And protein. And so at this point. In Matthew chapter 4. He is thin.

[7 : 11] And he is frail. He is emaciated. He is weak. He has no energy. He is in a very temptable condition. I think we need to understand.

It's a fasting of food. Not of liquid. He'd be dead if it was liquid. And so he's in this frail position. And the spirit drives him into the wilderness.

And he must meet the devil. Mustn't he? He is driven because he must meet the devil. Because that is why he's come. The reason the son of God appeared. Was why?

To destroy the works of the devil. And it's for this reason. That he's come into the world. We live in a supernatural world. We wrestle.

The Bible says. Not against flesh. And blood. But against principalities. And powers. And against the rulers. And the darkness of this world. There are unseen forces.

[8 : 10] At work. Every moment. And every day. Doing great acts of evil. And we need to open our eyes. To the fact that the devil. Hates the gospel. And he hates Jesus Christ.

And he hates Jesus Christ's people. And his one intent. Is to bring us down. And to cause us to fall. And so Jesus finds himself. With Satan.

Now I think for us. Most of the time. It is not Satan. Who tempts us. It's one of his. Interns.

Or apprentices. The devil doesn't need to come. In person to us. The devil is not omnipresent. He cannot be.

The devil can only be in one place. At one time. It's very important you understand that. And yet his power. Is awesome. And it is great. And so what does he tempt Jesus with?

[9 : 09] What is the first temptation? Well the first temptation is. He is hungry. And so he says. These stones. That are here. Turn them into nice hot loaves of bread.

There's nothing like bread. Is there? When you get up. In the night. What do you eat? What do you eat? When you get up in the middle of the night.

What do you eat? You eat something with bread. I. Poor Celiac. But there is. There's nothing like bread. Is there? The devil isn't.

Trying to tempt Jesus. Through something illicit. The devil isn't here. Trying to tempt the devil.

Through something immoral. There's nothing immoral.

In turning stones into bread. He's hungry isn't he? He's the son of God. Nothing would be impossible for him. He could perfectly well have done it.

[10:03] But do you remember how he responds. Well this is the moment. He takes the sword of the spirit. And he takes a verse from Deuteronomy. He says man shall not live by bread alone.

Jesus had come to be a man. He hadn't come to be somebody who performs party tricks. To feed himself.

That is not why he had come. He had come to be our substitute. We know that from just the baptism. We can't turn stones into bread. And so it would have been had he done it.

If you are the son of God. What says. Carlos Vos says. It should be rendered since you are the son of God. The devil here is not querying Jesus' identity.

It's not as if the devil is uncertain over who Jesus is. He says since you are the son of God. Use your son of Godness. To do a little party trick. And everybody will go ooh and ah.

[11:04] And the moment he had done that. He would no longer be our saviour. He would no longer have been our substitute. Just like we need somebody who is fully divine.

To save us. So also we need somebody who is fully human. Who represents to us a second Adam. And he has come to be that last Adam.

He uses the sword of the spirit. The word of God. And then you remember in the second temptation. According to Matthew. It's a different order in Luke. But in Matthew. The devil takes him to the pinnacle of the tabernacle.

In the temple. So what the devil does. The devil quotes scripture. And the devil knows the bible. He can quote it.

And so that means that somebody who can quote scripture. Isn't necessarily a Christian. Isn't necessarily born again of the spirit of God.

[12:03] The devil quotes scriptures. Jesus. And he quotes the psalms. About not dashing your feet. He quotes the psalms.

About an angel coming and supporting him. And your foot won't be allowed to be dashed against a rock. And Jesus again. He holds. The sword of the spirit.

And he says to see. You shall not put the Lord your God to the test. From Deuteronomy again.

Because what would it accomplish. If Jesus had jumped down from the temple.

Into the Kidron Valley. And angels came. And slowed him down. And so he came to a stop. One inch from the ground. What a glorious sight that would have been. But it would have been a little trick.

Church is always looking for little tricks. Isn't it? Temple jumpers. People are able to do astonishing things. It's all about the miraculous. And the incredulous. But that is not why Jesus had come.

[13:03] And we saw this morning. Didn't we? That Jesus uses his miracles. Efficiently. And sparingly. Actually. And they are always in the interest. Of furthering his mission.

As the saviour and redeemer. And you notice. He uses the sword of the spirit. And the same is true in the third temptation. Satan. Takes him to a very high mountain.

And he says. Look at this. Look at the sea. It's a gorgeous view. Kingdoms of this world. All of these will be yours. If you bow down and worship me.

Some commentators say. Well Satan is over. Reaching. His case here. The devil is claiming too much. And because. Psalms tell us.

The earth is the lords. And the fullness thereof. But I think that's to misunderstand. What the Bible says. The devil. Is called isn't he. The prince. And the power of the air. It's called Ephesians.

[14:01] The prince of this world. And there's much in this world. That is under the control of Satan. Just read the newspapers. Listen to the headlines. The world is crazy.

Satan is busy. Everywhere. In education. In commerce. In legislation. And not just in our country. But all over the world. There's a great deal of evil. In the world. Be gone. Satan.

Jesus says to him. You shall worship the Lord your God. And him only. You shall serve. And again. He's quoting from the book of Deuteronomy. Now what does that tell you?

It tells us Jesus has learned the book of Deuteronomy. Again. Don't make the mistake. That because Jesus is the son of God. He knows everything.

[14:58] That he had a little switch. That he flicked on. And he became kind of son of God. Where he knows everything. And he knows the whole Bible. He just knows it.

No. He learned it. As a boy. And as a teenager. And as a young man. He grew in wisdom. And favor. With men and with God. He studied the scriptures.

He learned the scriptures. And he uses these texts from Deuteronomy. Not just vague details. But he uses the actual text. Of scripture. Memory verses.

If I keep a little like that. Like a sword. The sick fleas. Now I'm aware there are aspects of the temptation of Jesus.

That are very unique. To the temptation of Jesus. I don't think it's a good practice. To say we must do exactly what Jesus did here. He was. In a very specific role.

[15:58] Wasn't he? He was taking on the role as the mediator. The God man. But I do think we can apply that principle. Of using the text of scripture.

As a sword. I don't want to be over mystical. And over experiential. But there are times out there. In Christian experience. When. There is an unexplainable coldness.

And a dryness. And. A fear. That is unexplainable sometimes. In ourselves.

It feels. Sometimes. Not. Not often. But it feels like a cold shiver of terror. Spiritually. Am I alone in that?

Am I the only one? Do I need counselling? Yes. But. Not for that. And I. I want to say. That. That is often. Either the devil.

[16:57] Or one of his interns. But what do we do at times like that? Well. We begin to recite the scripture. Don't we? We say to ourselves. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down.

In green pastures. He restores my soul. Though I walk through the valley. Shadow of the valley of death. I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and your staff. They comfort me.

What is that? That is. Using the word of God. As the sword of the spirit. The Bible. The Bible is God's word.

All scripture. Is the product. Of the out breathing. Of God. That is what Paul says. God breathes out. And what you have is scripture. And it is profitable for doctrine. For reproof. And for correction. And for instruction. In the way of righteousness. That the man of God. May be thoroughly equipped.

[17:56] For every good work. Peter. The Apostle Peter. Says something very similar. He says that scripture. Is not a product. Of man's intuition. Or the Bible. Is not the product.

Of man's invention. It's not the product. Of a human's interpretation. It doesn't originate. With man. Men spoke. Yes. Men like. Moses. And David. And Isaiah. And Ezekiel.

And Amos. And others. They spoke. But they spoke. Exactly. What God wanted them to speak. And so what you have. As a result. Is scripture.

No scripture. Is of a private. Invention. But men spoke. From God. So remember. How Peter goes on. To say something. Absolutely astounding. He speaks about. That time of transfiguration. The mountain of transfiguration.

That other occasion. Where. Jesus heard. The audible voice. Of his father. Saying. This is my beloved son. And whom I love. And Peter says. Well I was there. I was there.

[19:00] I was there. On the mountain of transfiguration. And then he goes on. To say. We have a more sure word. Of prophecy. He's talking about the bible. We have something more sure. Than what I saw.

With my own eyes. On the mountain of transfiguration. That is astonishing. I think. If I was Peter. And I'd be on the mountain of transfiguration. I'd be going on and on. On about it.

Isn't it? And Peter is saying. I have something far more sure than that. I have a bible. I have the word of God. Paul speaks to me.

About taking up the sword. Of the spirit. That's really important. The relationship. Between the word of God. And the holy spirit. The bible is authored.

By the holy spirit. He is the principal author. Of scripture. From one point of view. You can say. Well there are 40 different authors. For scripture. There are three different languages.

[19:58] There's Greek. Hebrew. And Aramaic. Silver of Span. Of about 1500 years. There's all different kinds of literature. Poetry. History. Apocalyptic. Gospel.

Letters. There's architect drawings. Different types of literature. But the principal architect. Of scripture. Is the holy spirit. There is one mind. Behind the scriptures. And because the principal author.

Is God. The holy spirit. And God cannot lie. Therefore scripture cannot lie. And that's why we believe. In the infallibility. Of scripture.

That all scripture is true. That there isn't one falsehood. There isn't one lie. In the bible. I think it's Charles Wesley said. If there's one falsehood.

In the bible. There might as well. Have been a thousand. And Jesus is using. The sword of the spirit.

[20 : 53] In a manner. Which says. I trust. The very. Words of God. Just a verse. From Deuteronomy. And I trust it. And I trust it. Implicitly. And by the power.

Of the holy spirit. It has the power. To send the devil. Packing. To send him away. And I want to emphasize to you. The connection. Between the word. And the spirit. It's not the spirit.

Without the word. That happens. Doesn't it? Churches go in that direction. They become all.

Mystical. And have certain feelings. You think of the quakers. Always waiting for the spirit. To move them. Waiting for some inner light.

To occur. You think of endless singing. In meetings. Where the bible is shut. And now let's get on. With the worship. But you can go.

To the other direction. Can't you? And you can go. To the direction. Of being all about the bible.

And nothing about the holy spirit. You can have an orthodoxy. Which is like the pharisees.

[21 : 48] That's always quoting the bible. Always studying the bible. But no illumination. No understanding. And Satan will try to get you.

He'll try to get at our children. And try to get at our church. It may be the lies. That the science. Has all the answers. It'll throw an awful lot of knowledge.

At this. High school. And university students. Overwhelmed. By just the amount of knowledge. That there is. Sounds highfalutin. And actually.

It's why we need to know our bibles. It is a sword. And so when you lose. Confidence. In the word of the spirit.

And the truthfulness. Of scripture. And the infallibility. Of the scripture. What you're left with. Is he who shouts loudest. Wins the argument. And gets the most attention.

[22 : 44] Isn't that? That's what's happened. And so we live in a culture. Which is really. All at sea. Isn't it? That's really confusing.

Where people don't know. Right from wrong. People don't know. Male from female. And here is the sword of the spirit. And when you find yourself.

All at sea. And you find yourself. Getting angry. Righteously angry. At the stupidity. Of the world.

And the stupidity. Of the thought. Of our culture.

We need to find refuge. In the sword of the spirit. The word of God. And we take. The sword of the spirit. Just notice. We finish up.

The emphasis. Is there's something for you. To do. Isn't there? That it's not going to happen. For you. There are times.

[23 : 43] I think. When we're so weak. And we're in such a desperate place. That God brings to our mind. Doesn't he? Some verse of the Bible. Well. We've forgotten about it. And yet. Suddenly.

This. It's such. Gives us such great strength. It almost takes over. As it were. And we believe. That's possible. And sometimes. That God is very kind. And he does that. But not always.

The responsibility. Is entirely yours. So learn. The scriptures. And you can't use. The sword of the spirit. If you don't know.

The scriptures. So therefore. We need to be. In our Bibles. And reading our Bibles. And enjoying our Bibles.

And memorizing our Bibles. Let me encourage you. This summer time. Why don't you. Sometimes. Pick up your Bible. And read it. For fun. Just read it.

[24 : 42] For fun. We live in extraordinary days. Don't we? Where our access. To the Bible. Is so immediate. Imagine you lived. In medieval times.

In the 12th century. You wouldn't have a copy. Of the Bible at home. You'd have to go to church. And even then. It would be in a foreign language. In Latin. And the chances of you. Having good enough Latin.

To understand. Jerome's Volgate. Would be very minimal. And we're not in those days. Thank God.
For the Reformation. Thank God.
For translators. Like Tim Dale. Who were burned at the stake. Because they translated the Bible.
Into a common language. And so learn the Bible. Study the Bible.
Love the Bible. And enjoy the Bible. And use it. Like a sword. By the help. Of the Holy Spirit.
[25 : 39] And the devil. Will flee from you. Every time. Every time. Let's pray.