

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT
Ephesians 6:10-20

Intro: The words which are translated, "Finally," at the beginning of our text are more than just words of conclusion (although they are words of conclusion if we understand the sense in which they anticipate the end of the Epistle). They are words of transition, linking what Paul has just said to what he is about to say. They are words which probably point back to the beginning of chapter 4, and possibly even to the beginning of the letter. Williams translates the words, "From now on." Other translations could be, henceforth, or, in the future. They are words which are meant to attract attention to what is coming in the light of what has just been said.

So, let us ask the question: What has Paul been talking about?

We can summarize the preceding part of the Epistle under three headings:

- 1) In chapters 1-3 Paul is concerned about salvation -- and especially that the Ephesian believers KNOW what they have in Christ. This is even the burden of his two prayers in chapters 1 and 3.
- 2) In chapter 4 and down through the 21st verse of chapter 5 he writes about their daily walk, i.e., how they are to live each day.
- 3) And then from 5:21 to 6:9 he writes about family relationships, and the relationship between masters and servants.

All of this would be difficult enough if the Epistle had ended with chapter 6, verse 9 -- but it does not. In addition to measuring up to such high standards, Paul now is going to tell us that we are faced with a host of enemies who are out to see that we are defeated in all three of these areas:

- 1) In our knowledge of the truth.
- 2) In our daily lives.
- 3) And especially in our relationships with each other at home.

For this reason Paul says, ". . . be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

And then he follows with the reason for such an exhortation: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Paul gives this impressive and ominous list of of non-human, super forces, demonic in character, which we are not able to see, who have as their objective the defeat of all that is vital to us as the children of God.

Our only hope for victory is "in the Lord" -- and this is abso-

lutely the only hope!

This makes this passage one of the most important in all of the Bible for our victory over the forces of Satan himself, and the resultant blessing we may expect in these three areas of our lives:

- 1) Our knowledge of the truth.
- 2) Our daily walk.
- 3) Our homes.

I want to spend the time this morning dealing with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," but before I do, I want you to notice that the Lord has provided an armour for us, for each of us, and a weapon!

We are to put on the armour, we are to take the shield, we are to take the sword, and then we are to pray -- "praying always."

We need to know about each part of the armour, BUT WHAT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IS TO NOTE THAT EVERY PART OF THE ARMOUR HAS TO DO WITH THE WORD OF GOD! (Point this out.)

We look to the Lord for our strength. It is in our union with Him that we are strong. But He gives us that strength through His Word. His Word gives us strength. His Word gives us peace. His Word gives us faith. It is all in His Word as He ministers power and blessing to us. So we must look to Him, and we must be concerned with His Word.

But now let us think particularly about "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Note first of all . . .

I. THIS IS THE ONLY WEAPON!

This is really incredible, isn't it? With the countless numbers of the enemy, many times converging on one believer, and all we have is one weapon -- "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

If you are inclined to have a low estimate of the Bible, then just spend some time thinking about this.

What power there is in the Word of God when God is using His Word! All of the forces of hell are powerless before it.

But now let me ask a question about this "sword":

II. WHY SHOULD WE TAKE IT? Read v. 17.

Obviously if it is our only weapon, that is reason enough.

But let me give you some other reasons which are to be seen in the text.

A. Because the Lord says for us to take it.

Don't forget that what we are reading this morning is "the word of God"! If He says that there is only one weapon, and that we should "take" it, then there is nothing more important for us to do.

Oh, let us pray every time we read this Book that the Spirit of God will impress upon our hearts the realization that this is really the Word of God!

B. Because Paul tells us to take it.

The book of Ephesians is the Word of God, but it is also a letter from Paul. Paul is not forced to write things he did not believe. He had found this was the only hope of victory in his own ministry, and so, writing from a Roman prison, he tells them that this is the only weapon, and that they must "take" it.

C. Because of our own weakness.

If we were strong enough to face the multitude of enemies which we have, this passage would not be in the Bible. But we aren't strong enough! One of them would be too much for us to handle. Our weakness demands that a mighty weapon be placed in our hands -- and we have that weapon, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

But we need also to take it . . .

D. Because of our enemies:

1. Their numbers.
2. Their power -- angels are greater than men.
3. Their craftiness -- "the wiles of the devil."
4. Their invisible character -- we can't see them.
5. Their base of operations -- not on the earth, but in "high places," which gives them a definite advantage.

E. Because this is absolutely our only hope for victory over the Satanic forces.

But now I want to look a little closer into this title for the Word of God, the Scriptures.

III. WHY IS IT CALLED "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT"?

A. It is called the Holy Spirit's Sword because He is the

One Who made it for us.

Cf. 2 Pet. 1:21,

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Also see 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

- B. It is called the Spirit's Sword because He is the One Who teaches us what it means.

Cf. John 16:12-15,

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

- C. It is called the Spirit's Sword because He is the One Who uses it.

Relating all that the previous passages have taught us concerning the Word of God, we can then turn to Isa. 55:11 where we find these words,

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Now we need to ask,

IV. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "TAKE" IT?

Since many of our struggles with our enemies are internal struggles -- struggles with faith, struggles with our own weaknesses, our attitudes, etc. -- it must involve a personal appropriation of the Word if we are to "take" it.

I sincerely hope, and I have prayed, that you will "take" some of the Word of God with you as you go this morning that you did not have when you came!

How do we "take" it?

- A. We "take" it when we get to know it, to understand it, through reading it, or through hearing it taught.

- B. We "take" it when we believe it.

The writer of Hebrews was talking about people in Old Testament times when he wrote,

" . . . but the word preached did not profit them,
not being mixed with faith in them that heard it"
(Heb. 4:2b).

Believe the truths of Scripture. Stand firmly upon the promises. This is a part of what it means to "take" it.

- C. We "take" "the sword of the Spirit" when we obey it.

Obedience to the Word of God always brings the blessing of God. It is not just for us to know, nor is it just promises for us to claim, but it is a life to be lived.

- D. We "take" "the sword of the Spirit" when we use it.

How do you witness to people -- do you use the Word, or just talk about it? Parents, how are you instructing your children? Do you use the Word itself, or do you just read stories which others have written from the Bible? What should a Pastor be doing? His messages should be filled with the Word of God -- that is "the sword of the Spirit."

What do you do when you are discouraged? Do you go to the Word? Do you review the truths which apply? Do you remember the promises? What do you do when your heart gets cold toward the Lord? What do you do when you have wrong attitudes? What do you do when you need an answer for a problem you are facing? Do you go to the Word? When you need comfort -- where do you go?

The Devil and his forces defeat us when we fail to use the Sword of the Spirit.

Concl: There are other places that we need to use the Word of God, where the Enemy and his forces are defeating us.

Many Christian homes are in serious trouble because a husband, or a wife, or both, have not taken the Sword.

The Devil has lured some of you into pleasures that have stopped your spiritual growth, or you have desires that are more important to you than your spiritual life because you have not taken the Sword of the Spirit.

The Devil and the demons will seek to kill our love for the Word, or to make us content to hear it, but not to live it -- and especially to leave it out of our homes. The solution is in looking to the Lord for strength, and then to put on the whole armour of God -- taking "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Tonight I want to talk about prayer.