

I. Introduction

- A. The year is 1861, and a fledgling America is plunging into Civil War. At the same time, half a world away, on islands remote even from New Zealand, two missionaries are awakened by a loud commotion. They hear men outside their primitive thatched hut. The men are chanting to their gods, calling for the death of the missionaries.
- B. John Paton, and Mary Ann Robson Paton, husband and wife, peered through their small window. They saw that scores of hostile islanders have surrounded the station with torches. They intended to burn the place down and to kill the missionary couple. Worst of all, this was a cannibalistic tribe. They had already feasted on the flesh of other missionaries before the Patons.
- C. The Patons got down on their knees and prayed throughout the night, asking God to deliver them.
 - 1. Their prayer focused on the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:20: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."
- D. Well, they were at the end of the world. That promise that Christ would be with them even there, was John Paton's life verse. He proclaimed it over and over again throughout his harrowing adventures as a missionary.
 - 1. To them, it was the Word of God. To them, it was a word of God's presence and word of God's protection.
- E. But now, their lives are on the edge. They will not survive the night.
- F. The tense, dark hours passed, yet the islanders kept their distance. They were still chanting, but strangely growing quieter.
- G. Finally, around daybreak, the Patons looked out the window again. They couldn't believe their eyes. The hostile tribesmen were gone. John Paton was baffled. There seemed to be nothing preventing the islanders from attacking, yet no attack came.
- H. These men were cannibals. They had already massacred other missionaries, and eaten their flesh. Why were he and his wife spared?
- I. Paton didn't find out why the islanders left so mysteriously until a year later. That's when the chief of the tribe became a Christian. Remembering that siege a year before, the missionaries asked the newly converted chief what happened. "Why did you leave before you burned our station to the ground? Why did you spare our lives?"
- J. The chief replied, "We were afraid of the men who were with you."
- K. "Men?" Paton said. "What men?" The chief said, "There were a hundred tall men around your house that night. Their clothing shined with light, and they had swords in their hands. We knew that they would never let us harm you, so we went back to our village." [Source: Ray Stedman, *Spiritual Warfare*]
- L. "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." That was the word of God to them.

II. The Armor of God

- A. There is more to this world than meets the eye. And so the Word of God reveals what the eye cannot see:
 - 1. *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."* (Ephesians 6:10-11)
- B. We may not be called to preach the name of Jesus on remote islands to flesh-eating cannibal tribes, but we are still called to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- C. And, to do that, we have to put on the whole armor of God.
- D. We have been studying this armor now since the New Year. And today is installment number 14 in the series, **The Christian In Complete Armor**.
- E. Here is that armor:
 - 1. *"Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."* (Ephesians 6:14-17)
- F. Here is the great good news:
- G. There is no threat, no trouble, no difficulty, no loss, no heartache, no pain, no temptation, no disappointment, no demonic attack, and no assault of earth's giant Pain Machine, that can get through armor of God and defeat you in the great cosmic conflict of the ages.
- H. There is a great cloud of witnesses to testify of one immortal truth: THE ARMOR OF GOD WORKS!
- I. Our focus today will be on that last piece of armor:
 - 1. **The Sword of the Spirit**
- J. Which is the Word of God. The Devil hates the Word of God.

- K. The Word of God is the devil's kryptonite. I have five lessons today about what it means to take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

III. Lessons on the Sword of the Spirit

A. BATTLEFIELD - the fiercest battlefield in the cosmic conflict is the terrain of the believer's heart and mind.

1. The mind is the battlefield. This is where the war is fought. It is the very real inner world of your mind, your heart, your psychology, and your soul.
2. So Satan works overtime to raise up strongholds across the battlefield of your mind.
 - a) *"This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic."* (James 3:15)
 - b) *"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,"* (1 Timothy 4:1)
 - c) *"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."* (2 Corinthians 11:3)
3. The battlefield is the mind. Too many Christians and too many churches get the order wrong. We talk about right living, and right choices, and godly behavior, and holiness of life.
4. And all those things are true, and so important. You are looking at a pastor who has written two books about holiness and sanctification.
5. But how do we get there? You can't get to right living by preaching right living. The reason is because right believing produces right living. We have to teach and preach for right believing. And right thinking produces right believing. And right doctrine produces right believing.
6. So right doctrine (teaching) produces right believing. And right believing produces right living.
 - a) Right doctrine > Right believing > Right living
7. And so when the devil come in, he's working way less on the the living level and way more on the doctrine and thinking level.
 - a) *"Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."* (Colossians 2:8)
8. Your mind is a battlefield. Therefore...

B. SWORD - Your primary weapon against doctrines of demons are the doctrines of the Word of God.

1. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.
2. The Holy Spirit has proclaimed war, and he wields a two edged sword. The Word of God is that sword.
3. It is the Spirit's sword because...
 - a) The Holy Spirit inspired the Bible... so that every line is the utterance of God, perfect and without error in every word and truth.
 - b) The Holy Spirit illuminates the Bible... so that any person hearing or reading or studying can understand what God has said.
 - c) The Holy Spirit applies the Bible... so that when the Word gets in you, the lies you believe are surgically removed and you actually begin to think God's thoughts after him.
4. Wherever God has given me a pulpit I have done my imperfect best to teach and communicate and preach and write the doctrines of the Word of God.
5. The supreme message of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit does not glorify himself. The message of the church is not to be Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit.
6. Jesus said,
 - a) *"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me."* (John 15:26)
7. And that is what the Spirit has done, is doing, and will do. He bears witness to Christ. In fact the whole Bible is in some way pointing to who Jesus. In theology, this is called Christology, the doctrine of Christ. And Christology is organized into two great parts.
 - a) Part One: the Person of Christ. Part Two: the Work of Christ.
8. After the resurrection, Jesus was making many appearances in different places to different believers.
9. In one of those appearances, Jesus catches up to two men walking on a road from Jerusalem to a city called Emmaus.
10. So they're walking, and Jesus catches up to them. He overhears their conversation. They are talking about Jesus, and about reports of his resurrection. And Jesus can also hear that they are both very, very confused and very, very sad.

- a) *“So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’”* (Luke 24:15-17)
11. So they don’t recognize Jesus, and they basically say, Dude, have you been hiding under a rock? Everybody knows this stuff. Jesus was a mighty prophet. He was horribly crucified. He died. And this is the third day, and now we’re hearing these rumors that he is risen again. And these rumors have been confirmed by reliable eyewitnesses. And we don’t know what to think.
- a) *“Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ [=the Messiah, Jesus] to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded [interpreted] to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* (Luke 24:25-27)
12. Moses and the Prophets are the whole Old Testament. The Whole Bible as it existed in that day. The New Testament wasn’t written yet, but it had the same theme.
13. And that theme was Christ.
14. And if they hadn’t been foolish and slow of heart, they would have found right there in their Bibles everything they needed to know.
15. That from the beginning, God promised a coming Savior. He would be their Messiah and their King. But first he would suffer and shed his blood and die to reconcile sinners to God. And then he would rise again.
16. With two men on the Road to Emmaus, Jesus gives the best Bible study ever experienced on planet earth. I hope in heaven I can see the video of this Bible study.
17. The whole Bible speaks of Christ. All the prophecies, the sacrifices, the offerings, the priesthood, the garments, the vessels of the tabernacle. All the promises, all the moral law, all the explications of it. All the denunciations of sin. All the requirements of perfection. In symbols, in illustrations, in parables, and in plain teaching, all of Scripture — which is inspired word for word by the Holy Spirit — all of Scripture speaks of Christ.
- a) So we say that the heart of Scripture is Christ. The heart of Christ is Grace.
- b) And the heart of Grace is the Cross.
18. And this is the explicit purpose of the Holy Spirit... Jesus said, he will testify of me. And that is what he did. He’s been doing it since the dawn of creation. He’s been doing it since he inspired the 40-plus authors of Scripture. He’s been doing that in every communication and instruction ever given on earth that in any way is true to the Word of God.
19. It’s all about Jesus. Because when you assemble all the doctrines of the Word of God, you get a profile of Jesus Christ in his person and work. Why does this matter?
20. Because when you get Christology right... again, that’s the Person of Christ in his human and divine natures, PLUS the Work of Christ, centered on his Cross, and culminating in his glorious return and millennial reign...
- a) **When you get Jesus right theologically in your mind, you get the grace of God unleashed psychologically in your soul.**
21. The most destructive force in your life are the lies you believe, taught to you by Satan, coupled with the labels of doom he has slapped on you, taught to you by this insane culture.
22. So that the most life-giving force in your life will be truth of Jesus Christ and his cross and the riches of his grace for you.
- a) **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”** (2 Corinthians 8:9)
23. Jesus Christ is the answer to your poverty in every way shape and form.
- a) Jesus is your victory. Jesus is your destiny. Jesus is your majesty. Jesus is your glory.
24. And the greatest tragedy, and the greatest opening we give to the devil, is to be foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken of him, being moved by the Holy Spirit.
- a) **If the Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, then biblical illiteracy is the Church surrendering its arms.**
25. And I know that sounds harsh, and I know that bad news, and you know I want to be the bearer of good news.
26. But if the grace of God is there for us, and we don’t take it, then I’m going to stand here and preach and teach and motivate and, well, nag you until you do.
27. So here’s some good news.

C. HEARING - The secret of growing both knowledge and faith is by hearing again and again the teachings of God's amazing grace.

1. This is not a complicated thing.
2. Last time, I left you with a cliffhanger, and I want to clear it up.
 - a) I said that God has given you this armor.
 - b) And I said that the way to put on each piece of armor is by faith.
 - c) And then I asked, well what if your faith is small? What if your faith is weak? What should you do?
3. Look at this:
 - a) **"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)**
 - (1) (ESV, NASB, NIV, NLT, and all modern translations say Christ rather than God.)
4. What you are doing right now is how you put muscle on your faith. Hearing the Word of Christ.
 - a) Hearing of his grace. Hearing of his love. Making the case why your salvation is real. Understanding why the devil is a liar,
 - (1) And why accusations can't stick to you, And why guilt can't dominate you, And why your sins are paid for, And you've been redeemed, So you are set free, And your dominion is restored, And all of that.
5. We are supposed to learn the whole counsel of God, but we are supposed to trace it all back to Christ.
6. The word of Christ, the teaching of grace, the explanation and explication of a covenant of mercy between God and his people.
7. I saw an article from a popular website — a lot of you know know this Christian leader's name — and he said that when you study the Bible, you should ask five questions:
 - a) **Is there a command to obey? Is there an example to follow? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a principle to follow?**
8. This is exactly the problem with us Christians. Law, law, grace, law, law. Eighty percent law, twenty percent grace.
9. May I humbly propose five different questions:
 - a) **How is God's love taught here? How is saving grace deepened? How is Christ glorified in his Person and his Work? How are my riches and privileges in Christ expanded? How is God shown to be a better Father to me than I've ever thought before?**
10. Look for that. Study for that. This is what preaching should be, and this is what Bible study should focus on.
11. Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ.
12. Because this is what Jesus did on the Road to Emmaus. And this is the pattern for all the ages since then.
13. When Jesus and those two believers finally reached Emmaus, they sat together, and dined together, and broke bread with them and hung out for a while... and we get this:
 - a) *"Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?'" (Luke 24:30-32)*
14. The truth had an emotional effect on them. Their hearts were burning. That's what the word of God does when it's grace.
15. I hope and I pray that when I preach there are times you so see the grace of God that your heart burns with in you. That there is not just mental assent but emotional healing and psychological wholeness and spiritual empowerment all mashed together too.
 - a) When you keep on hearing the word of grace, your faith grows strong.
 - b) When you starve yourself of the word of grace, your faith grows weak.
16. I hope and pray that wherever you go, and wherever God may direct your path, that you never forsake the gathering of saints called church, and that you attach yourself faithfully to a church that proclaims Jesus Christ, Calvary's love, and God's amazing grace.

D. ACTIVATION - You activate the sword of the Spirit by speaking the truth of God's grace and provision into every trial you face.

1. Here's what I mean. Let's go back to the beginning.
 - a) **And take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.**
2. Here it is in Greek:
 - a) **...και..δέξασθε τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ Πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα Θεοῦ.**
 - b) The Word of God.

3. This does not use the normal Greek word for word. The normal Greek word is LOGOS. It can mean word, or message, or truth.
4. But this word isn't *logos*, it's *rhema*.
5. Our charismatic friends will tell you that *rhema* means a fresh word that the Holy Spirit invents for you when you need help.
6. I will tell you that it does not mean that. And not just me, but there is no credible biblical scholar that will agree with that.
7. *Rhema* just means to speak out, or say, or express the Word of God and the truth of grace.
 - a) Say. It.
8. Do you know what the devil does when you hit him with a so-called fresh word of the Spirit? He laughs at you.
 - a) It's a plastic sword.
9. But do you know what the devil does when you hit him with an expression of the truth of the Word of God? He runs from you. It's the finest steel blade of the Sword of the Spirit.
10. You wield the sword by saying God's truth, by speaking God's Word, by declaring God's grace.
 - a) When the devil tempted Jesus, three times... do you remember what Jesus said?
 - (1) Three times, Jesus said, It is written. It is written. It is written. He quoted Scripture. And the devil left him alone.
 - (2) He wielded the Sword of the Spirit by speaking God's grace and provision into the attack of the Evil One.
 - b) When the Goliath taunted David, David said,
 - (1) *"Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand... Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.'"* (1 Samuel 17:45-47)
 - (2) He didn't quote Scripture, but he didn't have to. Every word he says is filled with grace and truth. And he jabbed that sword of the Spirit right into the head of that giant, and the giant came tumbling down.
 - (3) And your giants will too. Because the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God... and the sword of the Spirit is the saying forth of the Word of God.
 - c) When the demonized King Nebuchadnezzar threatened Shadrach, Meschech, and Abednego with the furnace of roaring fire, commanding... Worship me or burn! They said...
 - (1) *"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."* (Daniel 3:17-18)
 - (2) They spoke the truth of God into the situation, and God walked with them through the fire.
 - (3) They were wielding the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.
 - (4) If you have the Word of God in your heart, you have the invincible power of God at your fingertips.
11. Speak truth into every situation. Speak power. Speak love. Speak grace. Speak the promises of God. Speak hope. Speak the blood of Christ. Speak resurrection power. Speak life from the dead. Speak abundance. Speak healing. Speak blessing. Speak better things. Speak the name of God. Speak the presence of God. Speak the character of God. Speak courage. Speak power. Speak freedom. Speak success. Speak abundance. Speak victory.
12. Speak truth, theology, Scripture, doctrine.
13. Speak, say it, sing it, pray it, shout it. Child of God, Speak Jesus!
14. Unsheath the sword of the Spirit and call out the Word of God.
15. Because... if you will for one shining moment, declare that the Battle is the Lord's, and tell evil you will not bow, and say to the Tempter, It is written, It is written, It is written...
16. Or if you will simply claim that epic promise, Behold I am with you always, even to the ends of the earth...
17. Then one day — it might here, there, or in the air — but one day, you will find out that when you wielded the sword of the Spirit, God sent a hundred tall angels, clothed with light, with swords in their hands to surround you and to send the devil and the demons back to the darkness where they belong.
18. The Word of God is living and powerful, even when you are not.
19. So speak it into your depression, speak it into your heartbreak, speak it into your illness, speak it into your debt, speak it into your addiction and loneliness and and bitterness and despair... and all of heaven will rush to your aid, because the child of God, clothed in the armor of Christ, can never, ever fail.