

... *apart from me you can do nothing* (John 15:5)

***If we want to be able to stand against the schemes or strategies of the devil in these evil days, we need take and use the sword of the Spirit, i.e. the word of God.***

## **A. Taking the sword of the Spirit, i.e. the word of God.**

We have come to the *sixth* and final piece of spiritual armor: the sword of the Spirit, i.e. the word of God. It should not surprise us that the word of is called the *sword* of the Spirit because God breathed the breath of his own Spirit into the word of God so that this word would be “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17; cf. Gen. 2:7). Our text tells us that we need to *take* this sword. Literally, it says that we need to *receive* it. Paul also said this about the *helmet of salvation*, i.e. the victory of the future brought forward into the present. Just as we need to receive the helmet of salvation from God as a gift given to us, so we need to receive the sword of the Spirit, i.e. the word of God, as a *gift* given to us. Concretely, this means that we need to read the word of God, meditate on it, study it with a *welcoming* spirit of receptivity and humility, so that the Holy Spirit can make his home in our hearts with this word. If we do *not* receive the word of God with such a welcoming spirit, he will not make his home in our hearts, for the Spirit of God does not normally make his home in hearts where he is not welcome, because these hearts resist him, grieve him and quench him. Consequently, the sword of the spirit cannot have its *cutting edge effect* in our lives. What is true for the written word of God is also true for the *preaching* of the word of God. In order for this word, as the sword of the Spirit, to have its cutting edge effect in our lives, we need to receive it with a *welcoming* spirit, meditate on it, study it and work with it. If not, the Holy Spirit will not make his *home* in our hearts as the sword of the

Spirit, because he normally does not make his home in hearts where he is not welcome, because we insist on resisting him, grieving him and quenching him (cf. Heb. 4:12).

**Reflect:** *Are you using the sword of the Spirit in your spiritual warfare? If so, how effective is it against the strategies of the devil? There is a little test to help us in answering this question: Are you receiving the word of God with a welcoming spirit, i.e. a spirit of receptivity and humility? Are you reading, meditating and studying the word of God as it comes to us in the scriptures and in the preaching of the scriptures? Or are you resisting the Spirit, grieving the Spirit, quenching the Spirit?*

## **B. Using the sword of the Spirit, i.e. the word of God (1)**

Roman soldiers had a long sword and a *short* sword. The sword mentioned in our text is the short sword resembling a *dagger*. It was used for cutting and stabbing as soldiers engaged in *hand-to-hand* combat. Earlier, Paul had spoken about *wrestling* against the forces of evil in the heavenly realms. As the word wrestling then, so now the short sword reminds us just how *personally* we are all involved in this spiritual warfare the devil is waging against the wellbeing of the church, God’s first installment of the life of heaven and God’s means of rescuing the world from the power and pollution of sin. We can use the short sword to *defend* ourselves against the attacks of the devil, just like all the other five pieces of spiritual armor. Or we can use it to *attack* the enemy, for this is the only offensive piece of armor in the whole armor of God that we are always to have one.

## **C. Using the sword of the Spirit, i.e. is the word of God (2)**

What this looks like we can see in how the *Lord Jesus Christ* used the

sword of the Spirit in his spiritual warfare when the devil tempted him in the Judean desert. During his 40 days and nights in the desert, the Lord Jesus *nurtured* his inner life through fasting and prayer. In doing so, he was intentionally *cultivating* his appetite and hunger for God. After 40 days, the Lord Jesus is exceptionally hungry. The devil, who has been watching and waiting during these 40 days, considers this to be the *opportune* time turn to God’s test into a demonic temptation. And he does so in a very *subtle* manner by suggesting that Jesus turn some stones into loaves of bread. This temptation is so subtle because there is *nothing* wrong with getting something to eat when you are very hungry. But the heart of this temptation is that it tempted Jesus to make his bodily appetites *superior* to his appetite for God. But if the Lord Jesus was going to be God’s *chosen son* to bear witness to the coming kingdom of God and, as such, be God’s means to rescue the world from sin and restore it to the image of God his *bodily* appetites would always have to be subservient to his appetite for God. The Lord Jesus demonstrates that his appetite for God is the greatest appetite in his life by skillfully using the *sword* of the Spirit stating that it is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” In doing so, he *protected* himself and *attacked* the devil. The Lord Jesus Christ was able to use the sword of the Spirit because he had *received* this sword into his heart with a *welcoming* spirit.

**Reflect:** *How have you and are you defending yourself and attacking the devil with the sword of the Spirit? If this sword does not function in your spiritual armor, why might this be the case?*

