

## EPHESIANS #103 6:17 6-21-15

### *SALVATION HELMET AND SPIRIT SWORD*

(Ephesians 6) Back we go today to the armor of God as we learn what it means to have a fighting Christianity, to have more than a wimpy, pallid, tasteless and puny faith, but a faith that can indeed be called *victory*. **10-17** *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* We have covered the first four pieces of spiritual armor and come today to verse 17a *take the helmet of salvation.*

(Hold Gator helmet) You all know what this is. This is a genuine, big-time college football helmet. And it is heavy. If you have never put one on come try this later. The helmet is the heaviest and priciest part of a football uniform because the head is a vulnerable part of the body and a blow to the head can put you out. You aren't supposed to go for a bike ride without a helmet, much less a war. Now, the helmet of the Roman soldier was not like a football helmet or even a marine helmet. The Roman soldier's helmet was a kind of cap which was made of leather; but this leather had been strengthened and ornamented with plates of metal. Thus the head was protected from the blows it may receive. As we put on our armor for spiritual battle the Lord directs us to put on a helmet, but it is not a helmet of leather or metal or plastic. We put on the helmet of salvation. Now, the word *salvation* is used in a variety of ways in Scripture. What does it mean here in this connection? I believe we get some guidance in that through another word of the apostle Paul, this one in I Thessalonians 5:**8** *since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.* Here he says our helmet is *the hope of salvation* which I understand to mean the anticipation of future deliverance. This is made even more plain in the next verse in I

Thessalonians 5:9 *For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* But wait a second Pastor - I thought we Christians are already saved, why does Paul speak of salvation as something in the future, as something to be hoped for? Well, here we hit on an important nuance of New Testament teaching. The New Testament uses the word *salvation* very freely and means by it slightly different things - some of which, for the Christian, have already occurred, some of which are ongoing in occurrence and some of which are entirely in the future. It is true in each way to say that the Lord has saved us, is saving us, and will save us and the New Testament speaks in all three of those ways. So often in American evangelicalism we use the term *salvation* to refer only to the forgiveness of sins which occurs at the moment one places faith in Jesus. We say that person “got saved” which is true, but that doesn’t tell the whole story. The work of God that begins with the rebirth and with forgiveness goes on to new and more thorough dimensions of salvation. Romans 13:11 says that salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. In saying that the apostle refers to a salvation which is coming, an aspect of salvation that is future tense. Therefore, I understand the protection which we are to put on our heads to be, in fact, the hope of glory, the hope of our ultimate deliverance from all trials, all injustice, and all sin. It is this hope that is to sustain us in the difficulty of battle. The Lord Jesus never indicated to us that the Christian life would be easy. He warned of trials and tribulations, of persecutions and distresses but then He always reminded us that one day we will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of glory to save his beloved from this present evil world. If you pay attention to world events we read something every single week about Muslim jihadists kidnapping, torturing, murdering Christian people in various countries. This is painful to read. Grievous! Distressing! How do you process that as one who believes Jesus reigns? You look at passages like II Corinthians 4:8-9 *we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.* And why is this? What sustains the believer? 14 *knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.* Paul says we look to that great day of salvation when our mortal bodies will be clothed with immortality, when we will no longer be subject to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune but will live in the presence of Christ 17 *For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.* And it is this hope of future grace that strengthens us for present battles. Recalling it, celebrating it is how we put on the helmet of salvation. I John 3:2 *Beloved,*

*now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And what difference does this hope of future grace make in your life? **3** everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.* Now if you are becoming pure in Christ are you winning or losing the battle against Satan? You are winning. And this verse says a key to winning is what? Hoping in, looking forward to, gaining strength from our future salvation. When the Lord God gave the book of Revelation to the apostle John He gave it to a church that was under attack, that had suffered greatly at the hands of her enemies, and the Lord was seeking to comfort her, embolden her - and how did He do it? He declares to us over and again in the book of Revelation that in the end Jesus will triumph and will save us and will wipe every tear from our eyes. Empowered by that great vision and hope the church would then be able to stand firm against the assaults she endured.

So, putting on the helmet of salvation means that when you are attacked, besieged, tried and tempted, and the devil mocks your faith and urges you to give up, then you answer by saying, “I am not deceived. I know there are steps and stages in salvation. I know that I am saved. I know that I am being saved. I know that ultimately I shall be completely saved.” Jesus is the Author and the Perfecter, the Finisher of our faith and Philippians 1:**6** *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.* As a Christian I am confident that I will not utterly fall before the enemy of my soul, and I know this because of the character of Christ. John 10:**27-28** *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.* Isn't that a beautiful picture? Wonderful things happen in the moment of temptation when we remember that our Great Shepherd is holding us securely in his hand, when we remember that nothing in the world can separate us from the love of God in Christ. We do that and we are equipped with the helmet. “*Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war, she waits the consummation of peace forevermore, till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.*” Therefore, we “*stand up, stand up for Jesus, the strife will not be long; this day the noise of battle, the next the victor's song, to him that overcometh a crown of life shall be. He with the King of glory shall reign eternally.*” When we sing that on the way to battle and believe its promise we have put on the helmet of salvation.

It's time for us now to move on to our sixth and last piece of spiritual armor - the sword of the Spirit. Now immediately, I think you will notice something distinct about this piece of our armor. Every other piece is essentially defensive and protective isn't it? But a sword serves both defensive and offensive purposes. And listen, nobody ever won a war without shooting back, hitting back, retaliating. We must wield the sword of the Spirit so that the devil will not keep attacking us but will in fact have to flee to lick his wounds. James 4:7 *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* There is only so much of God's sword that he can stand. Well, let's get some order in our examination of this powerful weapon, as we look at the identity, the nature and the use of this sword.

First, we see the identity of this sword. We aren't left to wonder what the apostle is talking about here. He tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. In the New Testament and the Old Testament the phrase, "word of God" is used frequently to refer to the Bible, to the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is not simply the word of men is it? The view of Jesus, the view of the apostles, the view of the faithful church in every generation has been that we have in the Scripture the very word of our God which equips us to do battle with the enemy. II Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.* This concept of the Bible being our sword is fairly popular in the American church. When I was a kid we often had sword drills in Sunday School where we competed to see who could most quickly locate a given passage of Scripture. How many of you brought your swords this morning? Many of us can hold up our phones now. Ephesians 6 identifies the sword as the Bible.

Secondly, we see the nature of this sword. It is called the sword of the Spirit and it is called that for two reasons. First of all, the Scriptures are the product of the Spirit's work. So your sub-point one is that the Spirit is responsible for the production of the Bible, for its inspiration. II Peter 1:20-21 *But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.* Moved, carried along by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is of divine authorship, being the result of the Spirit's work. He produces it. That is why it is such a dreadful error which many make to separate the work of the Spirit from the work of the word. I hear people frequently talk about the Spirit leading them to do and say things that are contrary

to the word. No, No. It is possible for the Spirit to lead us in mysterious, subjective, feeling-oriented ways, but the primary way He directs us is through the written word He inspired for our instruction.

Ultimately, to be a Spirit-filled, Spirit-directed person is the same as being a word-filled, word directed person because the Spirit is the Source of the word. And then the Bible may be called *the sword of the Spirit* because God the Holy Spirit makes it effective. He is responsible for its production and its effectiveness. Here we recognize that without the work of the Holy Spirit the Bible often does fall on deaf ears. That is why we pray for the Spirit to make the word powerful in our hearts. If the Spirit does not go forth to soften a heart, that heart cannot receive the word. It bounces off like a seed hitting rock-hard turf. And if the Spirit does not come along to water the word, then whatever word gets planted will never germinate and become fruitful. The word needs the Spirit, but one would expect that if the Holy Spirit authors the word He will also bless it. He attaches Himself to the ministry of the word of God and you should see that a Christian who is walking in the Spirit is not so much an emotional, feelings-centered believer but one who is a man or woman of the book, who seeks guidance from the Spirit-inspired word and who uses that word to resist the devil.

Well, there I have begun to speak of our next point which is the use of the Spirit's sword. The word of God is useful in our warfare against the devil in both a defensive and offensive manner. Let's look at each, beginning with the defensive purpose - how to wield the sword when the devil attacks you. (show Princess Bride clip, Epic Fight Scenes #6, thru 2:18 end at "Get used to disappointment. Ok") Make it your ambition to be a master of spiritual swordsmanship. As you may know our daughter, Sarah Beth, was diagnosed with leukemia when she was four. At the beginning of her illness and the treatment that came with it a little neighbor boy drew a picture for Sarah and it showed the little boy dressed as a knight attacking a dragon that wore the label "leukemia." I remember feeling, when I saw that, how much I wished I could take up my sword and go do battle with Sarah's disease but I had no weapons that were useful on leukemia. How do you fight such a thing? Some of you may feel that way about Satan. How do you fight such a foe, spiritual, invisible, crafty? God tells us - take up the sword of the Spirit. And Jesus is the supreme example of how to do that. Matthew 4:1 *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* Then one of the great understatements of the Bible 2-3 *And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He*

then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” The devil attacks - urging the Lord to use his power for his own gain, according to his own will. But Jesus counters **4ab** *But He answered and said, “It is written,”* It is written. *The Bible says.* Notice - Jesus does not say here, “Well, Satan, I’ve prayed about this matter and I believe the Spirit is leading me to....” No, No. Jesus didn’t have to pray. Jesus didn’t have to search his heart. He knew the will of God because He knew the word of God. **4** *But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’”* That is a quote from Deuteronomy. **5-6** *5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You’; and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.’”* Intriguing. It’s as if the Devil said, “Oh, we are going to quote God are we? Two can play that game.” So the devil quotes the Bible for Jesus this time. The devil often quotes the Bible and it grieves me how many Christians fall for his lies because there is a Bible verse attached to them that somehow can be twisted to his advantage. Rather than interpret God’s word with care and integrity we just go along with the enemy. Jesus didn’t fall for that. He responds to the bent blade of a twisted Scripture with the straight-edge blade of truth and says **7-11a** *“On the other hand, it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* **8** *Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; 9 and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’” 11 Then the devil left Him.* Resist him, says our God, and he will flee. And you are to resist him as Jesus did, with the sword of the Spirit. Again, Jesus didn’t mess around with Satan. He nailed him with the sword. He said, “this is written.” Not, *I don’t have a peace about it.* Not, *let me pray about it.* He said, *I have a clear word from God. God said it, I believe it, that settles it. You begone!*

In our Lord we see the defensive use of the word to fight off temptation. Now, let’s look at how to use the word offensively. In other words, we are to use the Scriptures to assault the kingdom of darkness. Specifically, what we do is preach the word in hopes of reaching lost sinners. What did Paul say about the power of the word? Romans 10:**17** *So faith comes from*

*hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.* What did Peter say about the word of God? I Peter 1:23 *you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.* God blesses the Scriptures to the rebirth of dead souls. I Peter 1:24-25 *For, "All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off; 25 But the word of the Lord endures forever."* *And this is the word which was preached to you.* You can see how the apostles used the word in their ministry. In Acts 2 when Peter preached the first Christian sermon he quoted extensively from the Old Testament and pointed men to Jesus and 3000 were converted. When Paul went into a city seeking for souls he went in with an open Bible, preaching to Jews and Gentiles what the Bible says. Paul comes to a new city in Acts 17 and there it says 2 *According to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.* Well, Paul, don't you know you can't argue people into the kingdom? Ever heard that? In a way that's false, in a way I think it's true. Paul didn't put his confidence in his argument, he put it in God's word and he saw results. But wait a second, Pastor, this was among Jews that Paul preached from the Bible. What can we do if we are witnessing to someone who doesn't believe the Bible is God's word like we do? Hmm. Let's see - do we believe the Scriptures to be the sword of the Spirit or not? Imagine that you are at war and in a life or death struggle with your enemy. In your hand you have a knife but your enemy says, "Ha, I don't believe in knives." Do you say, "Oh rats, and throw the knife down?" Listen, you don't have to believe in it to be cut by it. Preach the word and watch what God does.

Doug Kelly tells of how in 1917, after the Marxists took over Russia they began printing anti-Christian tracts by the millions. These tracts quoted portions of Scripture in order to make fun of it and point out mistakes in it. However, the printing presses were soon brought to a halt when the government realized that thousands were getting converted to Christ just by reading these little "chopped up" portions of God's word in tracts intended to destroy faith. Unwittingly the Communists had let a lion loose.

What a weapon God gives us in His mighty word! Use it for your defense. Use it to rescue those caught in the clutches of the enemy. Now, you will understand of course, that Satan absolutely hates the Scriptures. He fears the word of God. Isn't it interesting that the three things they don't want in public schools are guns, drugs and Bibles? Those are the same three things they look for when you go through customs in certain countries. In many places you can

take in anything but drugs, guns and Bibles. Why? Because all three of those are powerful. Satan knows that about the word, fears that about the word and therefore will do anything to keep you from knowing it, and using it. He will seek to persuade us that it really isn't God's mighty word. He will seek to get us all excited about other things so that we neglect it. The last thing our enemy wants is to fight against well-armed soldiers of Christ who know how to imitate Jesus and quote specific, appropriate Scriptures that counteract his lies. Do you see from how Christ used the sword what you need to work on in your life? And do you see from what we have read how important it is to become a skilled swordsman with the word of God? AW Tozer says this - *“Whatever keeps me from my Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to be. Whatever engages my attention when I should be meditating on God and things eternal does injury to my soul. Let the cares of life crowd out the Scriptures from my mind and I have suffered where I can least afford it. Let me accept anything else instead of the Scriptures and I have been cheated and robbed to my eternal confusion.”* Obey God when he says to take up the sword of the Spirit.

I want to pray in response in a moment, but first I challenge you to make a decision today. Maybe the Lord would have you sign up for a Bible Study class, or read so much per day, or spend a half hour daily in the word, or memorize some verses or portions that especially speak to where the devil has been after you. We have the opportunity to disappoint the devil and please our Father. Would you ask God what you are to do as we pray?