The Sword of the Spirit

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. We have been walking this semester through what we know as the armor of God here from Ephesians 6.

! Let me once again read this passage to have it in front of our minds. And thoughts tonight, starting in verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of His might.
Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
Stand, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.
[1:25] In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

As we've been studying throughout this entire semester, this is not only a metaphor that Paul uses here, borrowing from the imagery of a Roman soldier, it also borrows the Old Testament imagery of the armor that the Lord Himself wore.
It is now given to us in Ephesians 6 to take it, put it on, and put it to use. And each of the details of the pieces of armor have so much significance, and one of the things that is really, I think, a delight, when we study God's Word, and when we do our best to understand exactly what is on the author's mind, in Bible interpretation, what we would call authorial intent.
The Scripture really comes alive to us as we do our best to study it. For example, as we look at this final piece of armor tonight, the sword of the Spirit, how is that different from the belt of truth?
Is there a nuance? Is there a distinction from the truth, which was the early part of the armor, and the sword of the Spirit? And as we study the detail of the language and of the context here, I think we're able to see there is so much for us to understand that has such rich meaning for us.
[3:15] So, as we've done with each of these pieces of armor, let's start by understanding the metaphor. What is in the mind of the author? What is in the mind of the reader? As this metaphor is used, and then progress from there to see how we would use this in a spiritual sense.

So, here's our first question. What did the sword do for the soldier? Well, there were at least a couple of different kinds of swords in Paul's day that the Roman soldier would use.
One's called the romphia. It's a long sword. That's not the word that he uses here. Another kind of sword is a machaira. That is the word that is used here.
Machaira would be anywhere from as short as maybe 8 inches to as long as 18 or even as long as perhaps 24 inches. The machaira was the short sword, the small sword, the one that you could quickly and easily grab and quickly handle with your hand in face-to-face combat.
The machaira is the sword that you'll remember in the Gospels when Peter swings for the head of Malchus and misses and cuts his ear off. That was a machaira.
[4:27] Same word that's used here. Now, understand a little bit of how battle would take place, and you can see the progression that is in Paul's mind here.

So, we looked a couple of weeks ago at the flaming arrows, and we spent some time looking at what that meant for us in the spiritual armor. So, what you would do is if you're going to combat an

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army versus another army, you would take these arrows, light them, and send them through the sky.
And the idea, of course, would be if it hit a soldier, if their shield didn't protect them, then that flaming arrow could kill them. But with it being lit, even if it struck the ground perhaps, it could cause fire and spread and create all kinds of chaos.
They would then advance a little bit more toward the opponent, and this is where they would take these long javelins and throw the javelins in the air. Again, perhaps a javelin would come down and strike an enemy soldier, and it could kill them or injure them.
But even if it did not, what could happen with the javelin is the sword, I'm sorry, the shield that we looked at a couple of weeks ago, the shield could absorb the javelin.
[5:38] But if the javelin stuck in the sword, or stuck in the shield, that shield becomes too heavy to carry. It becomes too heavy to maneuver around.

You can no longer quickly move it where you need it to be because you'd have the javelins sticking out from them. So what you could do is use the javelin perhaps not to kill the enemy soldier, but to render their shield useless.
Now you're prepared to rush them in hand-to-hand combat. Now you take out your makaira, which is both an offensive and defensive weapon.
It's defensive because if an animal comes at me, I can protect myself with it. It's defensive because if somebody comes to attack me, I can quickly grab it and defend myself. It's offensive because if I see that you have lost your shield, I can now come against you with my makaira and be able to attack you.
And so that's how the soldier would use the sword. So when he says, take the sword of the Spirit, take the makaira of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, it brings us to a second question, simply this, what is the sword of the Spirit?
[7:03] Well, we know the sword of the Spirit is given to us by the Spirit of God. It is both from the Spirit and it's how the Spirit works.

He tells us exactly what it is. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. So the primary way that the Spirit does His work is through the Word.
2 Peter 1.21, No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
How did the human author know what to write when they were recording the Word of God? They were carried along by the Holy Spirit. 2 Timothy 3.16, All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
Scripture is breathed out by God. So the primary way that the Holy Spirit works is through the Word of God and the way that He does that first was by inspiring the human author what to say.
[8:18] God breathed out and the men were moved along by the Holy Spirit and He put that all together and it's the Word of God that lasts forever. As Isaiah 40.8 reminds us, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of God will stand forever.

Or as one man put it, the Word of God does the work of God by the Spirit of God in the people of God.
Which is why we've got to be people who know the Word. This is how the Holy Spirit does His work. So the source of the Word of God is the Holy Spirit.
The sword of the Spirit is the very Word of God. Now again, the language is helpful for us here. Verse 17, the sword of the Spirit, the mechira of the Spirit, which is the, and the English word here is the Word of God.
John 1, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The word there is logos. It's not the word used here.
[9:32] This is rima. It's an important difference. Logos, the word there meaning, referring to the entirety of the truth of God.

Rima, referring to the specific Word of God. Not as much the embodiment and the totality of the Word as we would read in John 1, but the very specific statements in Scripture.
Scripture. So what he's saying is, we have the sword of the Spirit, which is the very detailed, specific Word, the rima of God, which tells us that we need to know the very specific, detailed Word of God.

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Now this is critically important because if you take a hundred Christians and ask them, do you believe the Bible? One hundred Christians, hopefully, most if not all of them, would say, yes, I believe the Bible.
But there is a much more important question if they say yes to that, and that is, do you know the Bible? To say I believe it and do not know it is a horrific indictment upon us.
[10:51] So when he says that we take up the Word, or we take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, the rima of God, what he's saying is that we take up and put to use the truths, the principles, and the doctrine of these specific statements and the specific teaching in the Bible.

The Logos of God, the entirety of his Word, the rima of God, the specific statements of his Word. This is why biblical precision is so important.
If I said to you, do you believe the Bible, and you say yes, and I were then to say to you, what does the Bible say about whatever doctrine, to not have any idea what the Bible says about that, what is the value in believing something if you don't know it?
If you can't explain what the gospel is biblically, what use does it say to say that I believe the Bible if you don't know what it says? And so when the Bible speaks of in the armor of God, you put on the belt of truth.
As we looked at a number of weeks ago, you're talking about the entire system of the Word of God, the entire doctrine of who God is, the entire belief of what it means to be a Christian.
[12:17] We gird ourselves, we encase ourselves in the belief of the gospel. But as Christians, when we go to do spiritual combat and spiritual warfare in teaching, in making disciples, in singing praises, in prayer, we must not just believe, we must know the very Word of God.

And that's precisely what the language teaches us here. That we would take up the sword of the Spirit, the very words of God.
that we would be able to know what the Bible says about marriage and what the Bible says about the church and what the Bible says about the gospel and what the Bible says about sin and repentance, what the Bible says about origins, what the Bible says about morality, what the Bible says about the second coming, what the Bible says about eternity and the eternal state.
It's all in there, and we need to know the very detailed, precise, specific words of God.
And so when Paul includes this weapon in the warfare, he's telling us, you must know your Bibles.
[13:52] To put it simply, you could think of the belt of truth as this. You must believe the Bible, but the sword of the Spirit is you must know the Bible.

You must put it to use. You must be able to apply it. Now, how did Jesus use the sword of the Spirit?
How did he give us an example of taking this machaira of the Spirit and using the rima of God? Well, turn with me just for a moment to Matthew chapter 4.
I'll just show you a couple of quick examples here. You're familiar with Matthew 4. It's one of the accounts of the temptations of Jesus here in the wilderness.
Chapter 4, Matthew verse 1. Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry.
[14:53] And the tempter came and said to him, If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. Now, I don't want to break where we are too much to get too detailed in the nuance of Matthew 4.

I want you just to think in mind of how the Lord used the sword of the Spirit. I do want you to notice, though, that what this temptation is about is not about Jesus eating.
This is a temptation to get Jesus to doubt the trustworthiness of the Father. He's saying, you're the Son of God. You're hungry. There's stones everywhere.
Your Heavenly Father's not feeding you. He's not providing for you. Why don't you command these stones to become bread? And you can eat. Verse 4.
It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every... What is it? Word.
[15:55] Rima. Where did we just see that? The sword of the Spirit. It's the Word of God. Jesus literally using, quoting, same language as is used in Ephesians 6 to say that we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Every word. The conviction of my heart, the aim of my life in pastoral ministry is that every word be preached.

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Every word preached. Whatever is inspired, let's handle it. Let's rightly understand it. Every word preached. And we get that because it's the very words of the Lord Himself.
We don't live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God, as He quotes here from the Old Testament. He knew the Word. He was able to pull the machaira of the Spirit and use the sword of the Spirit, the rima, the specific truth of God.
So, when the Lord Himself is tempted in the wilderness, it's not just that He believed in the Scripture. He knew the Scripture. He could put the Scripture to use.
[17:21] He could take in a moment of temptation and rely on the Word of God as both His defense and His offense. Verse 5, And that's really interesting.

Because verse 5 says, The devil took Him up. And verse 6, The devil said to Him, If you're the Son of God, throw yourself down.
And then the devil quotes Scripture. If you don't know the details of the Word of God, you are going to battle with less than even your enemy has at His disposal.
You must know the Word. The devil quotes from Psalm 91. Of course, he twists it up. He seeks to abuse it.
He seeks to use Scripture to actually entice Jesus to not trust in the Father's plan. You must know the Word.
[18:56] Not only so that you can use the Word as your offense, but that you can recognize false teaching as well. Understand that what's happening in this part in the temptation is the devil is quoting Scripture.

And if Jesus does not know the Scripture, He is in trouble because the devil does. This reminds us that just because somebody quotes a Bible verse does not make them trustworthy.
Be aware of that. You must know the rhema of God, the details of God, the Word of God. It is not enough to just say, I believe the Bible while it sits on your shelf.
I believe the Bible while I never read it or study it. I believe the Bible, but I can't explain what the Bible says about any doctrine that I would say I believe. We must know the words of God.
We must believe the words of God. Absolutely put on the belt of truth. Absolutely gird yourself with the belief that you trust in the Word of God.
[20:10] But you must then be able to take up the sword of the Spirit, the specific, detailed Word of God, and use it as your offense against the enemy and in spiritual battle, and to protect and defend your life and your family, just as Jesus teaches us to do.

Verse 7, Jesus said to him again, it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. Jesus refutes the devil by knowing the very Word of God.
Turn with me to Mark chapter 7. Remind you of some words we studied not too long ago.
Verse 1, The Pharisees gathered to him, and with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.
[21:29] And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?

Now stop just a minute. I know we just studied this on Sunday morning earlier this spring, but just remember the context here. These religious leaders are confronting Jesus and saying, how dare you not submit to our authority?
Who do you think you are? Why do you not do everything that we say? Why do you look at us as if we're not the final authority on all things? They are confronting and questioning and condemning Jesus because he does not seem to be concerned with these religious leaders being the final word or authority.
And in verse 6, he said to them, well did Isaiah prophesy. What's he doing? He's quoting the Old Testament. He's quoting the very words of God.
When confronted by the devil, he quoted scripture. When the devil would try to take scripture and manipulate it and take it out of context, he would refute that by properly explaining what the word says.

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[22:54] Here in another situation in Mark 7, the religious leaders come and say, how dare you? Who do you think you are? And Jesus now, once again, is going to rely and rest on the very details of the word of God.

Jesus doesn't just simply say, I believe the Old Testament. What he says specifically is, Isaiah got it right when he said, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. It's the sword of the Spirit. It's having ready access to the very details of the word of God to teach, to defend, to confront error.
Here are just two examples that we see, Matthew 4 and Mark 7, of how Jesus specifically uses the sword of the Spirit.
How he knows and can draw on the very details of the words of Scripture to be able to refute error and confront those who would seek to condemn him.
[24:18] Another example just comes to mind, not of Jesus, but in the Old Testament of Jonah, after the prophet has run away from God. He's been thrown overboard. He is swallowed up by the fish.

And the Holy Spirit preserves for us what Jonah the prophet prayed when he was in the belly of the fish. And if you take Jonah chapter 2, you can just read his prayer.
And if you have that open, then you have another copy of the Old Testament and Psalms open, you can chapter and verse the entire chapter. Jonah prayed the Psalms.
You can't read in the belly of a fish. You won't get phone reception in the belly of the fish. You need to know it. It needs to be in you.
You need to not only believe the truth of the Bible, you need to know its words. You need to not only believe the logos of the Bible, you need to believe and know the rima of the Bible, the details, the specifics, the nuances.
[25:29] You need to know the Word of God. So how can you take the sword of the Spirit? That's the language given to us here in Ephesians 6.

Verse 17, take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. How do you take the sword of the Spirit? It's the simple things that you've known for years.
We just need to do them. Read the Bible. Pray the Bible. Sing the Bible. Memorize the Bible. Meditate on the Bible.
Live in your Bibles. The Old Testament says, speaking of the Word of God, this is no idle thing. This is your life.
If I were to say to you, are you a college football fan?
[26:35] And you say, oh yeah, I love college football. I love college football. And I say, really? Well, who do you cheer for? I'm an OU Sooner fan. I love the Sooners. Oh really? That's great. I love the Sooners too. Who do you think is the best quarterback that's played for OU?

I don't know any of their names. Oh well, who do you think is our best Heisman Trophy winner? I'm not sure what the Heisman Trophy is. I would question if you really love the OU Sooners.
You ought to be able to dialogue with me a little bit about the greatest college football team that exists. You ought to be able to do that. If you really believe they're the best, you ought to be able to talk about some of the specifics.
Who's our winningest coach? Who's our best running back? Which national championship team do you think is the strongest? Who's the best defensive player to come through? If you really love them, if you really believe that it's a great team to root for, you ought to be able to dialogue a bit about the details.
Well, how much, infinitely, how much more is that true about the Word of God? If we really believe it, if we really think it contains the truth, if we really believe it's what leads us to life and to godliness, if we really, as we just sung tonight, if we believe that He has the words of life, then where else would we go?
[28:04] If we really believe that, then surely we would spend time reading and memorizing and praying and singing and meditating upon the very words of God so that we could put them to use in our life.

And just a couple of examples of how you do that. When you're discouraged, you can turn to Jeremiah 15, 16 that says, Your words were found, and I ate them.

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And your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart. When you find yourself doubting your salvation, you turn to John 20, 31 that says, These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.
When you find yourself trying to fight against the temptations of the world, you go to 1 John 2, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. When you start to think that your life is futile, you remind yourself of Philippians 1, 21, that to live is Christ.
[29:36] No matter what the details of your life may be, to live is your time to magnify Christ. And when you get to the end of your life and you find yourself fearful about that, just complete the verse, and to die is gain.

If I say to you, do you believe the Bible? And you say, I do believe it, and you get to your deathbed, but you don't know it, where are you drawing your strength?
But if you've been taught biblical songs that teach you the Word of God, and if you have memorized the Word of God, and if you understand what the Bible teaches about life, and about death, and about salvation, and about eternity, you are able to rest in those things.
The way that you fight an anxious heart is to know the Word of God. A lot of times, people will phrase it something like this, I don't know why I'm so anxious, I don't know why I'm so nervous, I don't know why I'm so distraught.
I mean, I believe the Bible, but the question is, do you know the Bible? Now, I affirm that you should believe it, but it really doesn't make any intellectual or theological consistent sense to say, I believe in the Bible, I just don't read it.
[31:07] I believe in the eternal Word of God, I just don't know it. I believe the way that I can know the God of the universe is through His Word, I'm just too busy for it.

It just doesn't make any sense. So, when Paul says in Ephesians 6, take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, he's saying, live in your Bible.
Know it. Study it. Meditate on it. Read it. Think about it. Pray it.
Sing it. Apply it. Live it. So that whether you're fighting temptation or ministering to a family member at death's door, you can take your machaira of the Spirit, and you can take that rhema of God, and you can begin to apply specific words of hope and words of life and words of truth.
Not merely saying to someone on their deathbed, we believe the Bible. Saying to someone on your deathbed, remember the promise of Jesus that great is your reward in heaven.
[32:36] Not merely saying to somebody, I believe what the Bible says, but being able to take what the Bible says and remind them that surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

Then you will go to dwell in the house of God. know the words of the Bible to comfort your soul, to ground your faith, to fight your enemy, and to bless those in need around you.
Take up the sword of the Spirit. Believe it. Know it. And live it.
Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time. Next time.
Next time. Next time.

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