

Ephesians #07: Ephesians 6:17b

Ephesians

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Our text words this afternoon are the second part of Ephesians 6:17, and take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." And with God's help, we wish to consider with you God's word as the Spirit's sword. In the first place, the offensive nature of this weapon; secondly, the relationship of word and Spirit; and thirdly, the sword being used in battle. God's word is the Spirit's sword and we first will see the nature of this weapon in offensive; secondly, the relationship of word and Spirit; and thirdly, the sword used in battle.

We have been considering, dear congregation, the different pieces of armor that Paul has advised the Ephesian believer to gird himself with as he seeks to do battle against Satan and his many cohorts. Again and again we have sought to point out to you the strength, the devices, and the amazing power of the devil. We have underscored with you on several occasions that we must not underestimate this archenemy of God but to wage war properly against him, we need to be girt from head to toe with true armor of God's making and of the Spirit's blessing shall we do successful battle. Satan is powerful and clever. But on the other hand, we must also emphasize particularly today in the context of our text that we may not overestimate the power of Satan either. A common extreme of our day is to underestimate his devices but we may also go to the other extreme and see everything in our lives as being permeated by the influences of Satan and may spend all our energy making ourselves conscious of the devil and thereby allow him as one of our forefathers admonished us not to do, thereby allow him to throw a permanent shadow across our lives. Satan, in other words, is not God. He is not almighty. There is one who is mightier than he and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And certainly God does not want the believer to go about fighting the devil as if the devil were the only thing he had to deal with on his journey to eternity.

The devil must not only be dealt with defensively through the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the other protective gear we have considered in past weeks, but he also ought to be challenged offensively. He ought to be challenged by the power of the word and Spirit, knowing that that power for Christ's sake is greater than the power of Satan. And so the apostle introduces us in Ephesians 6:17b to a strictly offensive weapon, a weapon by which the living church may go out to defend and attack the archenemy. You recall some time ago when we considered the breastplate, we said

that that piece of armory was both offensive and defensive, though primarily defensive, it also had an offensive twist to it to encourage the believer to go forward under the protection of the breastplate. Well, the sword of the Spirit which we arrive to this afternoon is a similar weapon. It has both defensive and offensive characteristics but this time we see the first piece of weaponry that is primarily offensive in nature.

So the apostle says not only have your feet shod and the helmet of hope on your head, but take the sword of the Spirit in your hands, the word of God, and go forward offensively to challenge the archenemy. The word of God obviously here means the holy Bible and here, my friends, in itself we have a living proof of the authority, the divine inspiration, the divine character of Holy Scripture. So mighty is the weapon of Scripture in the Spirit's hands, so fully inspired is it that the apostle is comfortable in saying, "If you have this sword in your hand and may wield it rightly, by the Spirit's grace you may be stronger than Satan himself." Certainly then the holy word of God is an inspired book. Certainly then the holy word of God is a powerful living book. Certainly then it is true what we read in 2 Timothy 3:16, that all Scripture and in the original language that word means every single Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, or literally all Scripture is God-breathed. And again, Peter tells us in that most wonderful of all texts supporting divine inspiration, that prophesy came not in old time by the will of men but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and that word "moved" means "to be borne along; to be carried along." These men were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They were carried along to pen the exact word of God that God would have them pen.

So God molded and trained these men to use them to record his precise word, so his sword is fine-tuned, his sword is sharpened at its edges, his sword is a perfect sword, his sword is a mighty sword, the sword of the word of God. Paul calls it the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit is the ultimate author of Holy Scripture, you see. The Spirit is the one who inspired these godly men over a period of a few thousand years to write in harmony, to write profound divine truth, to write the great truths of salvation. The sword of the Spirit, Paul says, is the word of God, thus the Bible is no human document, the Bible is God's very breathed word. The Bible is the very breath of God. The Bible therefore is the very power of God and so Paul says, "Take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God."

It's really quite wonderful, my friends, that he uses this phrase here "sword of the Spirit" because the Spirit and the word are inseparable. The Spirit is the author of the word. He is the one who works through the word in the salvation of sinners. Moreover, we may say the Spirit is the only right interpreter of this word and he teaches the child of God how to rightly use this word, and so in every sense the word of God is a sword, a powerful sword, but in every sense it is the sword of the Spirit.

What do we have in true religion apart from the Spirit of God? Nothing but our own human emotions and the dross and dung of human righteousness. Take away the Holy Spirit and we would have no word of God, we would have no base of authority. Take away the Holy Spirit, we would have no channel of right interpretation for that word. Take away the Holy Spirit, we would have no strength to use that word. Take away the

Holy Spirit, we would not properly understand the spiritual meaning and power of the word. Take away the Holy Spirit, we would have no sword with which to fight against Satan when he comes to do battle. We could not say to him, "It is written," and we would lose the battle, my friend, every time.

So you see the critical nature of this additional piece for the Christian soldier, the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Can you imagine a soldier who was outfitted from head to toe, has his breastplate, has his feet shod, has his helmet of hope, has his loins girt, but forgets to have a weapon, forgets to have an offensive mode of attack? What good is the whole gear of defensive armor if the soldier has no sword with which to fight in return? Well, my dear friends, God's people are often guilty of trying to don the whole armor of God without the sword. We may minimize or we may maximize the power of Satan but most of the time we minimize the power of the word of God and most of the time we minimize the power of the Holy Spirit as he uses that word in the life of the true believer. These two things, Spirit and word, always always always belong together, and we can only appreciate and understand what Paul is meaning here when we say as he does in one breath, "The sword, the Bible, of the Holy Spirit." In one breath he takes this sword which is the word, and he combines it with the notion of the Holy Spirit. The word of God comes from the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God works through the word of God.

They are inseparable one from another and so he says the sword of the Spirit, and only God's true people truly learn that relationship. Oh, how dependent they are upon the Spirit when they read the word of God, when they hear it preached, when they search it. How they long that the Spirit may shed light across its pages and shed light from its pages into their heart. How dependent they are and how much they have to learn their lines when the Spirit doesn't accompany it, how empty and how frail they are. Oh, how deeply they have to learn, "Lord, everything must come from heaven above." And that's not because this book is a dead letter, or because this book is empty, and this book only comes alive when the Spirit joins himself to it. No, my friends, that's the 20th century liberal theology of Karl Barth which has made inroads throughout this world in neo-orthodoxy. Barth said the book of the Bible is like a dead letter unless the Holy Spirit comes and then that part comes into life. That's a subjective approach to Scripture. And what do the Reformed say? What do we say? We say the whole Bible is a living book as it is in itself. It is a book full of life. It is a book full of inspired truth. Every verse in the Bible is inspired but the problem that we don't see that light and don't experience that light doesn't lie in this book, it lies in a dead letter of our own heart. It lies in the sinfulness and blindness and depravity of our own souls.

So we need the Spirit to shed with power the light of Scripture which is already in Scripture itself, to shed that into our hearts, to break through the locked bolts and bars and gates and doors and pierce our dark heart and give light through this living book. My friends, this means that we have to value highly the word of God and we must not think of the Spirit or of the word not only as apart from each other, no, we must not think of them also as competing with one another, or we must not think of the Spirit as somehow above the word. The Spirit works through the word. They are always together and this is what Paul was emphasizing here. This is the power of the word of God for taunts which

tempts the believer, and the Spirit accompanies that word to his eternal gain, and also to his relief when individual trials afflict him and circumstances. Indeed, it is this combination, this forging together of Spirit and word that leads him from the moment of regeneration to the moment of everlasting glory. Spirit and word are what his life depends upon.

Now there are two extreme errors that seek to break down this intimate relationship. The one error is like the Quakers. You've heard of the Quakers, no doubt, founded by George Fox. When George Fox began his teachings he was a thorough going Puritan, seemed to be very sound in his theology but gradually he came to develop a theology which said something like this: once we use the word of God and we feel the Spirit moving in our breast, in our heart, we can then set the word to one side because what's happening is the Spirit is speaking to us and then we rise above the word and we feel the power of the Spirit and then we may speak to others about the power of the Spirit within us, but we don't need the Bible then at that point because the Spirit is moving through us. So we use the word only to move toward the Spirit and to ask the Spirit to accompany it, but once the Spirit comes, he rises above the word and we may set the word to one side, and so that Quakers developed the notion that they called the Inner Light. And still today there are many Pentecostals, many Charismatics who in principle follow this teaching and I'm afraid also some in our circles who do not have a deep enough sense of appreciation of how the Spirit always works through the word, and therefore, my friends, the importance of constantly reading Scripture, searching Scripture, praying over Scripture, seeking grace to live by Scripture, asking the Lord that we may love Scripture, that Scripture may be the foundation of our lives, knowing that it is through Scripture that the Spirit works and speaks.

Now the Spirit can speak through Scripture as you are riding along the road, it can bring a text powerfully into your mind suitable for your personal spiritual circumstances that moment. The Spirit can equally bless your daily reading in the morning when you get out of bed or at night when you go to bed or at mealtime. Or the Spirit can bless the word of God through the preaching. Whichever channel he uses, not one channel is greater than another so long as we know that the Spirit is speaking to us through the power of his word.

People err greatly when they think that if the Spirit comes and speaks to their mind powerfully, that that is somehow greater than if they hold the Bible open on their laps and he speaks to them as they read it on a regular basis powerfully. No, my friends, what is important, what is important is that the Spirit speaks to us according to the need of our souls be that through one text impressed upon our minds, be that through a whole chapter that was read and gives us spiritual instruction, be that through a sermon in which we learn spiritual truth impressed upon us as never before, whatever it may be the Spirit speaks through the word and the exposition of that word to the salvation of the souls of sinners but also to the deceits of the archenemy Satan. Thus we reject wholeheartedly the Quaker viewpoint, even though it sounds pious and in a certain sense it sounds very very spiritual, it is unbiblical.

The Spirit never gets beyond the word. That's what Karl Barth and modernism teaches. Barth said there's always something behind the word and that's what we must get to, an inner light, an inner inspiration, and an inner truth. Scripture itself really isn't that much, Barth said, it's only when the Spirit enlightens it then that part becomes inspired for you and that's what counts and the rest doesn't matter.

Do you see the dangers of that? The Bible then really is no more than another book because you can pick up a good book or you could pick up a newspaper even and the Holy Spirit could use a sentence of that and have that sentence come to you with power, the rest of the newspaper would be nothing but that sentence would be powerful. And so the Bible, the same way, you see. Ultimately you strip the Bible of its sacred living authority, inspiration and power and you lose a firm base for guidance day by day, but you also lose a deep conviction in the hearts of God's people that when they are in darkness and when they don't have the Spirit working with power through the word in their heart, you lose the conviction that it's their own fault. If you believe in Barth and you believe like the Quakers, you see, then you can say it's not my fault. If the Spirit doesn't come and doesn't shed light on the word, then I have nothing. Then the Bible is a dead letter book and so we excuse ourselves for not having light and for not having the Spirit and for not having exercises of faith. The Reformers abhorred that doctrine. They said, "No, the Bible is the living book. We need the Spirit to apply it." Why do we need the Spirit to apply it? Because we have dead hearts.

So when the Spirit comes, he comes through the word but don't have to get behind the word, all we need is the word to be applied to our hearts. It's that simple. The truth is right there in every word of Scripture but we are blind to it. We are blind to it, that we don't see it on the very surface of Scripture but it's there and the Holy Spirit only needs to apply it to our hearts. And with the Quakers and with the false unbiblical mystics which the Reformers and Puritans opposed that said, "No, the word is not enough. We need behind that word the Spirit to give something else." And that's how we got through these different sects and movements many allegorical interpretations of Scripture because, you see, if the Spirit comes to your mind and impresses something upon your mind, something behind the word, you can say, "Well, I know this is now the truth. My own interpretation of it is the truth. And I can disregard all the rest of Scripture because that's a dead letter book and I believe that this is the truth." But you haven't compared Scripture with Scripture. That's often what the mystics and the Quakers were guilty of, false interpretations of Scripture due to impressions they have received in their hearts.

That's one wrong extreme, now the other wrong extreme is a much more common one and that extreme is to say, "Well, since we have Scripture before us and this is the living book of God, we can really ignore the Holy Spirit. All the promises of God are meant for everyone. The Bible is a book written to you so you may just take it by yourself, all you have to do is believe the Bible. All you have to do is have what we call historical faith, and if you have that, there's nothing more to have. You have the Bible, you just have to believe and take it for yourself." If anything this view is almost even worse than the first extreme. Both, of course, are totally wrong, totally unbiblical. The one says the Spirit moves beyond the word and the other's way to the Spirit way under the word and both,

my friends, are wrong. The one leads to a mystical subjective religion, the other leads to a free will religion. The true balance is, Paul so beautifully captivates it right here, the sword of the Spirit, something that is of something belongs to it. The word and the Spirit belong together. Yes, this book is alive. Yes, this book is full of promises, but we need the Spirit because of our blindness to apply them to our hearts.

This is the true relationship and this is the true experience too of the children of God, and now, my friends, it doesn't mean therefore that we sit back in our chairs and say, "Well, if the Spirit has to apply the word, then there's nothing we can do," but we are called to saturate ourselves with the truth of the word. We are called to do as that old Dutch divine William Braco said so beautifully, fill our minds with head knowledge and pray that the Lord may one day bless it to our hearts. We are called to know our Bibles well but never to mistake and bare head knowledge of the Bible, God forbid, but true saving knowledge of the Spirit's work of applying the Bible to our hearts. We need the Spirit to apply it and when the Spirit applies it, then we have a power, then Jesus says we have a sword, we have ground with which to appear before Satan and we may say to Satan, "It is written." When Satan comes and says to the believer, for example, "Well, the Lord will desert you in the end. You have been unfaithful." The believer may say, "The word of God has said to me he never forsakes the work of his own hands, and I have tasted that work through Scripture, Satan, I have tasted the power and the authority of the word of God and I believe that it is all inspired and therefore, Satan, what you have just said to me is a lie. He will not forsake the work of his own hands." And he's using, and that's only by faith and that too is a gift of the Spirit, that is using the sword of the Spirit to dispel Satan and his powers.

Now my friends, the more God's people know, love and live Holy Scripture, the more wisdom, power and authority they receive from the Spirit to withstand Satan by the word of God. The more they know it, love it and live it, the more they will find power to withstand Satan. That's the beauty of the Spirit is he advances God's people in the word. There are many things at the beginning of spiritual life that the young convert stumbles over and that Satan may use in his life to cause him much grief, and then as the Lord gives him further instruction, the Spirit may remove those causes by the power of the word, by light upon the word so that things that troubled him in the beginning days may never trouble them for the rest of the days of their lives. That's not saying they will be trouble-free. Far from that because the more they advance in the word, the more Satan will use his devices and the more God will also want his more seasoned people in grace to grow so the more he will allow also Satan many times to afflict his Job's. But you see, through that affliction, God oversees his people, he guides and watches them, he gauges the amount of the temptations of Satan. Bunyan says he gives out as many golden links on his chain to Satan as he sees fit that his child can endure, and then he matches, yes, he overcomes those amount of links of Satan by giving the child of God the wisdom and instruction, the power and authority of God's word that he needs to put Satan at bay. And the perfect example of this, of course, is Jesus Christ himself. Tempted three times in the wilderness, he answered every time as a model example for his people, "Satan, it is written." And all three times he quotes Scripture and he causes Satan to flee by the power of Scripture.

And this is always the case. Think of the Reformation, how weak and how temporary the whole movement would have been if the power of that movement had not been Holy Scripture. Martin Luther once said, "If Holy Scripture did not support me, I would have gone back to the Roman Catholic Church long ago, but my conscience," he said, "is held captive to the word of God." You see, the word of God was the sword of the Spirit in his hand. And not only Martin Luther but all the Reformers and all those who love the truth, my friends, they know moments and times where the word of God is their power and their strength to disband Satan and his devices.

I was pointing out to you before that beautiful picturesque portion of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" where Christian comes into the Valley of Humiliation and you remember how Satan torments him from all sides and tries to get him to believe that the Lord has never worked in his life and Satan is above him, ready to pierce him to death. And he is afraid, he is now going to perish but Bunyan says so beautifully at the last moment he reaches out his hand and he takes the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God and with one word from Scripture he gives Satan a deadly blow and Satan must flee for a time.

Oh, dear children of God, do you feel in your own life this connection between word and Spirit? And can't you even feel generally speaking in your life that the closer you live to the word of God, the sweeter the word of God is, the more you can say it is honey and in a honeycomb? Isn't it true that the more power you have to stay away from sin, the more power you have to endure temptation, the more power you have to cast Satan out? Oh, the closer we may hug Scripture to our breast spiritually speaking, the more we may love it, the more we may live it, the more we may be immersed in it, the more strength we have against the powers of Satan.

Now sometimes the Lord gives us that power just through a very general knowledge of the principles of Scripture. For example, the example I just gave you a few moments ago that Satan comes and says, "Well, you will perish in the end." The Lord may give power to that particular text I mentioned, he never forsakes the work of his own hands, or the Lord may give power just through a general conviction that you know from the reading of Scripture that the perseverance of the saints is always true, and you may feel the comfort of that word which from Genesis to Revelation supports that truth. And you may say, "Satan, no, I know that the whole word of God tells me, that precious word tells me that the Father will not let go, the Father will not let anyone pluck out of his hand those whom he loves."

You see, Spirit and word work together and now it's the Spirit that brings these things to mind at the opportune moments for the child of God. It's the Spirit who guides him in that word and teaches him that word more and more. But the believer is also responsible to immerse himself in that word and maybe he will immerse himself in that word and there will come back verses with power at the right times that he studied perhaps years ago and go nothing out of for his own heart, but the Lord can come back, you see, he can bless the head knowledge at a future date with heart application. But whatever way he does it,

whatever way he does it, of all these ways I'm suggesting, the truth is that the word of God in the hands of the Spirit is like a sword and it defends the believer against Satan.

So the sword of God proves victorious in the day of deadly battle but that sword in battle we hope to consider further after we sing first from Psalter 339, stanzas 1 and 2. "O Lord, my earnest cry, Thy listening ear has heard. With Thy salvation answer me, and I will keep Thy word and I will keep thy word." 1 and 2 of 339.

"O Lord, my earnest cry
Thy listening ear has heard;
With thy salvation answer me,
And I will keep Thy word.

At early dawn I prayed,
Thy promises my trust;
At night I thought upon thy word,
Most holy and most just."

"The word of God," writes the apostle to the Hebrews, "is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing asunder soul and spirit." The word of God in the hands of the Spirit pierces down inward into the heart of man and it slays his most evil nature, his most grievous sins and his great need for a Redeemer. The word of God in the hands of the Spirit convicts the sin and misery and makes room for the only gospel message but when that gospel message is received and that word of God follows its needlework with the scarlet thread of the gospel to sew the balm of Gilead into the wounded heart, then the believer who knows something of the fullness of Christ, something of the sufficiency of the gospel will find that this sword is also sharper than any two-edged sword to pierce asunder the enemies that attack him.

So the word of God first pierces the heart, exposes nakedness and sinfulness, but later the believer learns to use it more and more also not only to continue to pierce his own heart, that too in the way of sanctification, but here in our text to be a sharp two-edged sword against all enemies. And so when Satan attacks, the word of God gives ample answers for all his devices. When the world attacks the Scriptures say, "be of good cheer for I have overcome the world," or again, "you're not of the world even as I am not of the world," or again, "lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth or rust can corrupt," or again, "Abraham sought a better country who's maker and keeper is God." In all these scriptural ways, you see, the believer finds strength to resist the influences of the world as he seeks to live the life of Scripture. And that again not only against Satan and against the world but with reverence I say the believer learns by grace and by the Spirit, everything he truly learns is always by the Spirit, he learns to use the word against his own natural heart. He learns to turn that two-edged sword not only outward but also back again inward.

Isn't that what David was doing when he was depressed and downcast and he turned back to the word? And didn't he say, "Oh, why art thou, my soul, cast down and disquieted

within me? Hope thou in God." In Psalm 119 we read to you of 176 verses, we read just a few but for 175 of 176 of those verses all but one, you will find word in it each verse like, "Thy word. Thy statutes. Thy precepts." All words that refer to the word of God. 175 times there are references in one chapter to the power of the word of God.

So when the believer has his own heart infirmities, when he feels downcast, he turns to that word, or when he feels that he may be growing self-presumptuous and self-complacent, then he must seek also the piercing sword back again into his own bosom of that word. And how does that work? Oh, that works when the Spirit applies to his heart texts like these, "I count myself not to have apprehended but I stretch toward the high prize of the mark of the calling of God that lies in Christ Jesus." Oh, then the believer says, "If Paul has not apprehended, if he has not arrived, so to speak, how can I be so complacent?" Or again, "The righteous shall scarcely be saved"? Or again when the apostles speaks as they say, "profane and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save sinners of whom I am chief," if Paul is chief, then how can I be complacent with my sinfulness and my infirmities?

You see, the Spirit uses that word against the believer's own weaknesses and what a blessing that is, my friend, when the holy word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit becomes like a shepherd's rod and staff to beat us and to guide us and to lead us back into the right paths. It is the Spirit and word working together that gradually matures the believer and gives him a sense of balance in his life. A sense of balance between experiential misery, deliver and gratitude. A sense of balance between law and gospel. A sense of balance between responsibility of man and sovereignty of God. A sense of balance for the whole counsel of God's truth.

This is one of the most important functions in dispelling Satan and evil influences that the believer learns through the Spirit using the word more and more to live a balanced spiritual life. Now it seems that some of God's people make a great deal more progress here than others but this must certainly be the goal and the aim of all of them. And many times those who make little progress here are those who do not keep, as one of our forefathers said, their sword polished and bright. He must, my friend, be often looking in Scripture, be often praying over Scripture, be often seeking the guidance of Scripture, and when this is not the case, don't be surprised when your sword grows dull and is not mighty against Satan.

My dear friends, have you found out the two-edged nature of the sword of the Spirit of God's word? Has it pierced your heart with law and gospel? Can you recall times where that word was used by the Spirit to dispel Satan and his approaches? The world and its enticements? But also your own evil hearts in its natural inclinations to return to sin? And not only to sin but also when your own evil heart is prone to return to self-righteousness? Oh, even in a very religious and pious way, when your heart turns back to an old broken covenant work and you try to reapply it into your prayers to climb back up to God and through your experiences to lean on him as if those things in themselves do save you, oh, then does he not come with his word and correct you and strip you down again and show you how short you come on every hand? And do you know why he does that? So that you

never build on anything other than the one foundation of Christ Jesus and him crucified. If his word were not that ongoing stripping, cutting, piercing word in the hands of the Spirit, you would only be too glad, child of God, to soon build an empire of your great experiences. And the more we experience, my friends, when we experience things lightly, the more we learn how little experience we have and the more we are brought to rely in a simple empty-handed manner on him, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only way of salvation.

And you will say, "How does the Lord bring me to that way?" Precisely by what I'm saying right now, by stripping you down of everything else but Christ. One of the Puritans said, "The Lord brought me to Christ by first closing all other doors but Christ." And another one said, "He closed up my way and shut all my doors except the door to Jesus." That's the sword of the Spirit, the word stripping you in the Spirit's hands.

And you say, "How does that give me strength to fight the enemy?" It does, my friend, by tearing you down in yourself there is room made to build you up in Christ. And when you have strength in Christ but that same sword and by that same Spirit, when the word of God in the Spirit's hand builds you up in Christ and you see your strength and salvation and stability and hope and expectation in him, and you feel then that he gives you hands to war and fingers to fight and lift up your knees, then you receive strength to fight against Satan, to fight against the world and, yes, at times also to fight against your own evil heart.

So Paul says take, take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. There is not one device of Satan of which the holy word of God does not have an answer. My friends, what is the sword of the Spirit in your hand? Like all the other pieces of armor, we may leave it to one side, we may leave it in the closet as well. It didn't do Christian any good when it was by his side, only when he took it. That's the Spirit too. And take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Pray, my friends, that you may use that word more faithfully, that you may live by it more fully, that you may be immersed in it more deeply, that it may be a more powerful tool in your hands as you do battle against Satan.

What does the Bible really mean to you? Is it really your mirror to dress by as we read in James 1? Your rule to work by, Galatians 6:16? Your water to wash with, Psalm 119:9? Your fire to warm you, Luke 24? Your food to nourish you, Job 23:12? Your sword to fight with, Ephesians 6? Your counselor to resolve your doubts and fears, Psalm 119:24? Your heritage to enrich you, Psalm 23:4? Have you learned what the Reformers learned Sola Scriptura, Scripture alone? Have you really learned that Scripture, a life of Scripture is the most profitable way of living and the noblest way of dying? What does the word of God mean to you? Were we to take your Bibles out of your homes today, my friends, could you live without them for a year? A month? A week? Is your Bible by grace your best friend? Is it your companion? Have you ever wept over its pages on account of your sins and condemnableness? Have you ever wept over its pages on account of the fullness of a Christ preached on every page for a lost sinner like you? Have you ever with such sheer joy when the Spirit has applied that word, have you ever hugged the Bible to your very bosom? Have you ever kissed the word of God? Figuratively and even literally so

filled your world with the power, the authority of the Spirit speaking through it to your heart? Has the word of God ever spoken to you in such a way that you could say, "To me this word has said thus saith the Lord"? Then you know what the sword of the Spirit means and, my friends, we need to know it more. You can't have this sword be too powerful in your life. You can't be immersed too fully in Scripture. You can't live the Bible too much. You can't love it too much. You can't pray over it too much.

Seek, my friends, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Now you may agonize for that sword and you may beg and beg for that sword and you may read it and pray for application and you never receive an answer, then you may learn, "I cannot do it on my strength." But the Lord will come. The Lord will come. He comes to those who are true seekers and you must pray to be a true seeker. But if you just don't seek the word of God but sit back and say, "Well, if the Lord elect me, he'll elect me," and you don't search the one book that can make you wise to salvation or you're content to read it three times a day at mealtimes, my friend, does the Lord do injustice not to make it the sword of the Spirit for you? What does the Bible mean to you? Amen.

Lord, bless what we have heard. Use thy holy, precious, precious word in the hands of thy dear Spirit to convince us of sin, unrighteous and of judgment, and to lead us to the only fountain of salvation, but also subsequently to convince us of sin all the more deeply, and to guide us all the days of our life as a shining lamp upon our paths. O Lord, grant thy children among us more grace to take the sword of the Spirit in hand and defeat the enemy, but also teach us how weak and wounded we are when we have not the sword of the Spirit. Oh, make us jealous for that Spirit/word combination which gives power that even Satan himself has to recede from. Lord, bless us with the Spirit/word power. All this we ask with our continued guidance in this day and our safe return to thy house of prayer this evening. In Christ's name alone we pray. Amen.