

Series: *Take Up the Sword*

Title: "Take Up the Sword: Six Areas of Our Lives" (Ephesians 6:17)

Speaker: Rev. Adam Eshleman

Original Air Date: Week of 2/2/2019

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Why is the Bible called the Sword of the Spirit in Ephesians chapter 6? Why do so few Christians in our time know what the Sword of the Spirit is, and why every Christian must march toward Heaven with the Sword in hand? Why are we told to "take up" the Sword? Why is it vital for you – Christian man, woman, or young person – to understand why the Bible is called the Sword of the Spirit, and how you are called to use it, in many ways, every day of your life? Today we present the second of two messages on these important questions. Our speaker is Rev. Adam Eshleman, associate pastor of Reformation Bible Church in Darlington, Maryland. We are grateful for the opportunity to present these messages, and it is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use them to revolutionize your thinking about the Word of God in your daily life, and ground you more deeply in it. – Dr. Paul Elliott

Ephesians 6:10-20

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye

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shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel for which I am an ambassador in bonds that therein, I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.

As Spurgeon said, "...We must go to Heaven, Sword in hand, all the way. Take the Sword of the Spirit." What I would like to do is enlarge upon that. What does it mean to take the Sword of the Spirit? I have six areas of our lives where each of us need to hear an admonishment to use Scripture more. Take the Sword of the Spirit in these areas.

Take Up the Sword in Your Home

First, we must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in our homes. Fathers, I ask you, and I ask you in the presence of your wife and children, are you regularly instructing your family in the Word of God? We must take the Sword of the Spirit in our homes, in our families. Earlier in Ephesians, it might even just be on the same page, the Lord has gone through every relationship in the Christian life and has told us the one mark of a spirit-filled, and then named the relationship. We know these.

What's the one mark of a spirit-filled husband? Self-abasing love for his wife. What's the one mark of a spirit-filled child? Obedience to their parents, honoring

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them. What, according to chapter six and verse four, is the one mark of a Spirit-filled father? "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." That word "nurture" is the word discipline. That word "admonition" is the word instruction. Can a man who neglects regularly instructing his family in the Word of God keep that command to instruct and to discipline his children in the Lord?

Our time with our children is so short. I'm regularly told that, even by strangers in stores, when they see me with my young children, they tell me, "It's precious. It goes by so quickly. Don't take it for granted." Our time with our children is so short, and there's so much instruction to give them in the Word of God. Think of how little time we have with them. Our window for instructing them is so short. Are you not desirous to have a clear conscience in this matter, a clear conscience before God that you are clear of this? Will you not use every means necessary to snatch your little ones as brands plucked out of a fire? Take up the Sword of the Spirit regularly in your home and family worship.

Take it up spontaneously in your home in your instruction of your children, "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children and shall talk of them when thou sitteth in thine house and when thou walketh to by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up." Take the Sword of the Spirit in your home. We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in our homes.

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Take Up the Sword in Evangelism

A second sphere: We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in evangelism. There is so much more to this warfare motif that we've been talking about, so much more to it than my personal combat with the temptations of the Devil.

We've focused on that element of the warfare as we've gone through the armor here, but there is more to Christian warfare than my personal combat with the temptations of the Devil. We are in a war for other people's souls. There are souls around us which are in the dominion of darkness, and they're held captive by the Devil. There is only one thing that can liberate them. There is just one thing that can pierce through that intense darkness and shed light in their hearts. It's the Gospel going forth as a mighty Sword. We must be more faithful at speaking the Word of God to lost people around us, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

The Word of God and the work of the Spirit are the means by which the people of God plunder the strong man's house and spoil him and rob him of what is not his. That is what we're doing when we speak Scripture to unbelievers. That Scripture goes forth. As it goes forth with power, it's empowered by the Holy Spirit. God uses it to shed light upon darkened minds that they might turn from darkness unto light. We must learn to be more faithful at taking the Sword of the Spirit in our evangelism to a world around us. It's held captive by the Devil.

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Take Up the Sword in Building Up One Another

A third sphere: We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in building one another up. Take the Sword of the Spirit in building one another up in the body of Christ. We are called as the Body of Christ to encourage and to edify one another. This is so important because Satan is always at work and tearing people down. He's always trying to drag or draw Christians away. There's a sense in which we are our brother's keeper. We have a moral responsibility before God to help build one another up. The enemy of my soul is the enemy of your soul as well.

You and I have a fundamental responsibility toward one another to build each other up. We are weak and we need to lock arms, as it were, and go forth to the fight with one another, edifying one another. Satan does his work by degrees. People fall away by receiving a wound here and receiving a wound there, a gradual weakening of their resolve, and cracks put in their faith. We are in a battle for each other's souls. We need to realize that it is incumbent upon us to use the Word of God to edify each other, to speak truth into each other's circumstances, to bring each other under the authority of the Word of God.

Romans 15:14 says, "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." It is not the job of two or three professionals to minister the Word of God for the strengthening of this flock. It is the job of every person in this flock to strengthen each other in the Word of God. Remember what Paul said to the Ephesians elders in

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Acts 20. He says, "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up." It's the Word of God. It's the word of His grace that builds believers up. We need to be ministering the Word of God to each other.

We find this a struggle. I can't be the only one who feels this way about this. I can't be alone in this. We find it so much easier to minister a word of sympathy or a personal sentiment than we do to actually minister a promise from the Word of God. Do you find that true of yourself, how quick you are to give a sentimental word, how quick you are to be sympathetic with someone, and then to walk away not actually having given them any truth, any of God's Word, just personal sentiment and sympathy? We need to do better about ministering the Word of God intentionally to each other, to be recalling to mind the promises of God's Word, the commands of God's Word.

What people need is not just someone sympathy or someone's personal sentiment. What people need is the truth of the Spirit's Sword. Let us learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in edifying and building up one another. Our time is hastening on. I'll just be suggestive with my last three areas.

Take Up the Sword in Prayer

We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in prayer. This is the heart of prayer. Praying on the basis of, "You said." Our children are very good at using this argument with us. They say, "You said," all the time as the final argument for anything they want. God's children ought to be even more using that argument, for if God, their father, has said it, it is certain. It is forever settled in Heaven.

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We ought to be in prayer, growing in our ability and our knowledge of God's Word and our use of Scripture to buttress our requests so that we are praying on the promise of, "You said." We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit and to claim the promises of the word in prayer.

Take Up the Sword In Temptation

Fifth, we must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in temptation. We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in temptation. We talked at length about this when we spoke of the shield of faith a few weeks ago. We are called to be killing sin and snipping off dandelion heads is insufficient. We've got to get it at the root. The root of sin is in the heart.

There's only one thing that can pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and the joints and marrow. It is the living and powerful Word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword. If we are to have, ever, any victory over any temptation, it is going to be by wielding the Sword of the Spirit. No one ever gets victory over temptation by merely saying, "No." Self-discipline is not victory over temptation. All it will do is just rear its head in another place. You've got to kill it. You can't just snip off the dandelion head.

The only way to kill it is by the Word of God as a sword because that's the only thing that will penetrate into the human heart. We kill sin, we kill temptation, by believing the superior promise of the Word of God. It is the person who treasures God's Word in their heart who does not sin against Him. We have that promise in

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Psalm 119, and I'll quote it, "By word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Contrary to what we've been told when we were kids, it's not just talking about memorizing God's Word, because you can list all the Bible verses you want, and you're still going to find yourself sinning against God.

What guards the heart from sinning against God is not recitation of the words but believing them, trusting them, treasuring them. If you think of that word hide, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart," in the ancient world, why would you hide something? There are no banks. There are no safe deposit boxes. You're going to hide your valuables. You're going to hide what you treasure. That verse in Psalm 119 is promising us that when we treasure God's Word, when we love God's Word, when we believe God's Word, that is it which keeps us from sin. We must learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in temptation.

Take Up the Sword to Fight Despair

Sixth, we must learn to take the of the Sword of the Spirit to fight despair and doubt and discouragement. We've talked a lot about this over these weeks in Ephesians as well. So much of Satan's attack is leveled against us in doubt and discouragement. He exploits our consciences, he exploits our circumstances, and we must learn to battle those thoughts with Scripture. Emotions cannot be sustained without thinking. Moods are dictated by our thoughts. Our emotions seem to land on us like vague impressions but they're not. They're responses to thoughts. A Christian is called to have the mind of Christ and to be renewed in their mind and in their thinking.

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We've got to learn to use more Scripture to fight despair, doubt, and discouragement. We cannot be led astray by our culture, which fights those things by amusing ourselves to death. We can only fight those things with the Word of God, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and there be any praise, think on these things."

To Use the Sword Effectively We Must Know It Well

You can trace all of the problems of our thinking which lead to our problems in our moods and our emotions back to not thinking on those six things. How critical it is, therefore, if we are to learn to take the Sword of the Spirit in these ways, how critical it is for us to be daily in the Word of God. We need daily light for our daily path, or in the metaphor here, we need to put our Sword on. We need to have it in our hands in the fight. To use the Sword effectively, we're going to have to know it well. Unlike the shield – the shield just gives a broad defense. You just put it up, and that's all you have to do.

A sword is only used to deflect blows if you know how to use it well. You have to actually know strategy. You have to know it well. It takes skill, and the only way to be skillful in using the Word of God is to be regularly immersed in it. There are no shortcuts to this. Three-year-study M.Div. course is not going to cut it. It has to be a regular daily immersion in the Word of God. It's the only way to get skillful with the Sword. There are no shortcuts to this. The Puritans speak of Bible reading and Bible

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study in two aspects, plow work and spade work. We ought to be doing both in our regular exposure of the Word of God.

We need steady, regular times of exposing ourselves to the entirety of God's Word. We need regular diet of scriptural content, and we need more and more of it. You need more than, currently, you're getting and so do I. We need to plow through the Word of God in big gulps. We also need to take time in certain places and do the spade work and do the work of digging and studying, to come to a fuller, deeper knowledge of some passage or some theme. Both are necessary, plow work and spadework, if we are going to become skillful in using the Word of God. This is where the Word of God must begin, where using the Sword must begin, personal exposure to the Word of God.

We are only going to be prepared to wield the Sword in our homes or in our evangelism or in our edifying of each other in the Body of Christ or in our praying or in our fight against despair if we are actually, personally in the Word of God. That's where it begins. I cannot tell what particular difficulty you carried with you into the sanctuary this morning. You may be struggling to overcome some particular sin. You may be ready to faint in weariness for well-doing. You may have received news this week that absolutely turned your world upside down, and you do not know what the future will hold. Some relationship may be going awry, there may be riddles in your life which seem impossible to solve.

I do not know what burden you carry. I do know that whatever burdens you, you

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have this direction from the Word of God, that whatever your circumstance, take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. You must overcome every enemy, and this is all the weapon that you need. God grant you by His spirit's aid to overcome by use of the Spirit's Sword, and to take it up for His own name's sake.

Let's stand together as we pray: Word of God incarnate, we come to thee begging for a change of heart regarding thy word that we would value it more, that we would love it supremely, that we would take the Sword of the Spirit in all of our battles and use it more regularly and more effectively. For those who need to make changes, oh Lord, give them grace to do so. May we all, Lord, be more faithful in using your Word in this warfare you've called us to. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

About the Broadcast

The Scripture-Driven Church airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is to obey Christ's Great Commission: preaching the Gospel to all, and equipping believers in Christ to live every area of life by the sole authority of Scripture, to the glory of our Lord and Savior.

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