

## ***THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, LK.4:1-13***

Spiritual Warfare #6

◆Intro: There once was a king who dreamed that all his teeth fell out. He called in a wise sage to interpret the dream. The interpreter sorrowfully informed the King that all his relatives would die and that he, the king, would be left all alone. The king was appalled and had the servant executed. Then he called another with the same request. This man too interpreted the dream. He said with a smile, “Rejoice oh King, for your dream means that you will live many years. In fact, you will outlive all your relatives!” The king was pleased and rewarded this servant well. Two different outcomes, even though both men told the king the same thing, but in different ways.

◆ Imagine the power of words! Imagine the impact on the patient’s recovery if during the surgery she might hear the doctor say, “Sheesh, This just isn’t my day!” Words carry power. For example, the other day someone called the church office and wanted to speak to “the head hog at the trough”! Well, Kelli told him that was no way to talk about the pastor around here, to which the called replied, “Oh well, I just wanted to make a donation of a million dollars.” That’s when Kelli said, “The Big Pig will be with you in just a moment!” Yes, the power of words. Words can brighten the day of an otherwise achy, tired person with a mere compliment or affirmation. The right word, say an explanation, can sooth a boiling temper. An apology can calm a heart.

◆Prov. 13:2 From the fruit of his lips a man enjoys good things

◆*Prov.15:11 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

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◆ Now, if words are so affective in the life of a human creature, and if there is a creature beyond our material existence to whom all created matter accounts – a being transcendent, omnipotent, and sovereign, and almighty, say, “God” – then can you begin to grasp the power of a word spoken by him?

◆ [Quick reminder: our task in this series on the Spiritual Armor of Ephesians 6 is to become armed for battle against sin, evil, negative influences, and yes, the demonic that seeks to suck from our lives the joy, peace and hope that God desires for us. If your heart is committed to Christ, your eternal home is not in jeopardy. But you can lose daily battles, live miserably, grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and open your life experience to the spirits of the evil one. How is that going for you? ] Let's look at our next weapon: the sword of the spirit.

### **◆ 1. What is the Sword of the Spirit?**

◆ Paul defines it for us in the letter with the phrase “which is the word of God.” We know about the power of a word from God, do we not? This weapon is the first overtly offensive weapon. Shields protect. Boots protect feet. Helmets protect heads. Breastplates protect the body. Normally a soldier doesn't attack swinging his helmet at the enemy. But a sword? Not that's for attacking and wounding the enemy! God's word is a weapon.

◆ *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12, NIV.*

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◆A. Some of us who grew up in Christian circles might have played “sword drills.” Anyone? That’s where the leader calls out a Bible text and all the class races to see who can find it first in the Bible, and then stand up and read it. (We could try in now, if you like.) Consequently, you may have come to believe that your Bible is your sword. Ah, but wait. It’s a bit more detailed than that. There are several possible explanations for what is meant by the “word of God.”

◆1) It could be the scriptures of the Old Testament, considered God’s word by the people of Paul’s day.

◆2) It could be the remembered sayings of Jesus that became the basis of the New Testament, which were written down shortly after Paul wrote his letters to the Christian churches, which are also now part of the New Testament.

◆3) The “word of God” could refer to the Gospel story in general. Some texts refer to preaching the gospel of Jesus in the same way as speaking God’s word to the people.

◆4) The “word of God” sometimes refers to specific messages given by the Holy Spirit to individual Christians at a critical moment –such as when you are sharing your faith, or when you are earnestly in prayer asking God a question.

◆So we need to read carefully and interpret responsibly. What did Paul mean here by “the word of God”. Fortunately Paul uses precise terms. Instead of the usual term *λογος* (logos), Paul uses the term *ρημα* (rhema). Jesus is called the “word” or *λογος* of God. But *ρημα* (rhema) is a term that means a *spoken word*. So the sword of the Spirit is when we

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Speak into our lives the words of God. It is not your printed Bible per se. It is not that you own one that keeps the devil away, so much as when you speak it in life. It is not beating your disobedient child with a ten pound KJV, so much as uttering, vocalizing words of Scripture that the Holy Spirit brings to mind in a given circumstance. It is not whipping your bible open in a sword drill, so much as it is the reading of the text once you've found it. Follow? In short, using the sword of the Spirit is actually talking God's words into the world. (Paul uses a compound of this term in vs 20 which means "to declare".)

◆B. Now you may ask, "How does the Sword of the Spirit differ from the Belt of Truth? Isn't that God's words as well? Glad you asked. The Belt of Truth has to do with our knowing God's words, or God's truth, and thus recognizing lies, or evil when we come across it. For example, the devil would plant a thought in your head, "That guy cussed you out. It would feel really good to return the favor." But the follower of Jesus knows that Jesus said not to return evil for evil, but to absorb it, and turn the other cheek as well. And so he tells himself just that: "Do not return evil for evil." So the Belt of Truth helps us decide what to do by knowing what God says. The Sword of the Spirit is actually saying God's truth in the situation. Holding up a Bible will not keep the devil at bay. Nor will lifting a wooden cross back Satan into a corner. However, at a verbal reminder of truth, Satan cannot stand. You will notice in our text that this is precisely what happened with Jesus in the desert when tempted by Satan.

◆"The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man

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does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.””” Matthew 4:3, 4, NIV.

◆ It's interesting here that not only that Jesus fights off evil thoughts, the devils voice in his head, etc, by speaking scripture. It's also interesting here that the quote from Deuteronomy uses the term rhema, not logos! Jesus as our perfect example here shows us just what to do. He is 40 days in the desert. He is tempted by satan. He has fasted. He thinks of God's word: Deuteronomy 8 about Israel being 40 years in a desert, and being hungry and having no bread, and then being fed with manna. But the lesson of manna was that bread isn't what keeps you alive. It is the word of God that comes from his mouth. *Jesus is taking what he knows of God's word and speaking them into his situation. You and I can do the same thing.*

◆ **2. Wielding the Sword of the Spirit.** How do we swing the sword? The rhema of God?

◆ **A. Mention God's words in the face of wrong, and spiritual opposition.**

Understand friends, it is not enough to merely know the truth vs the lies if you want to change the world you live in. You need to speak the truth. For one thing, evil spirits are not all knowing. (Only God is.) But they can hear just fine. Satan can't hear your prayers, your confessions and renunciations of evil. So make sure and let him know where you stand. Pray out loud. reject his lies out loud.

◆ Jesus didn't turn and walk away from the devil in the desert. He quoted the book of Deuteronomy. And then, when the devil quoted

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the Bible in the second temptation (v6) Jesus quoted more of God's words to show that you can't use the Bible to say anything you want, like the Devil was doing. No, you need to interpret Scripture with Scripture. Compare what God says with the other things God says. Know them well to use them well. They're not just magic spells you utter. You have to know their truth and apply them rightly. But when you do you can thwart evil. Satan left Jesus. He couldn't get anywhere with him. Jesus spoke God's truth into life.

◆“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.” Revelation 19:13-15, NIV.

◆What strikes down wrong? Speaking the truth of God.

◆1) There are other things significant about speaking God's truth; First, speaking the word is how conversion happens.

◆“*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word (rhema) of Christ.*” Romans 10:17, NIV.

◆2) Second in the power of mentioning/ speaking the truth of God is that what we hear fills our minds even unintentionally, and the more we hear it, the more space it takes in our thoughts. Have you ever noticed that when you hang around with people who use the same foul words continuously, and for all parts of speech, that you begin to think those words too when say, you jam your toe or cut your finger? Purely by being around it, it has

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become normal to you. We become desensitized to it and might say when questioned, “I don’t mind it.” What does that mean? Literally? You are saying, “I don’t think about it.” or “I am unaware in my thoughts of it.”

◆ Music is a powerful example of this. Of all the practices a Christian should sanctify, I believe, music is at the top of the list because what we hear, and what we repeat with our mouths, sticks in the mind.

One expert child psychologist in Memphis TN says that violent drug abusers he treats are “by and large into heavy metal (Megadeath, Black Sabbath, AC/DC, etc.) The music doesn’t make them do it, but the lyrics become their philosophy.” Sgt. Randy Emon, a CA policeman and teacher of the only state certified course on occult crimes, cites heavy metal music as 1 of 3 common gateways into the ugly world of satanism. Now hear this right. I’m not saying that rock music is evil. Those of you who know me know better than that. What I am saying is Christ followers should be highly discerning about the words they let pass through their brains.

◆ B. Now if you are going to begin being a person who brings God’s truth into the situations of life, you will have to be doing some reflection as a way of life. You’ll need to learn to ask, “What does God’s Word say about this?” What do I know of what God has said that applies here, which leads to another way we can use the Sword. Meditate on the Word in order to speak it well into life.

◆ [Here we need to heed a warning. Speaking the truth into our world is the calling of the Christ-follower. But speaking the truth is not the same thing as “putting someone in his place.” Speaking the truth isn’t

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the same as condemnation although there is a time and place for that. Speaking the truth takes thought (meditation) and love.

◆ *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”*

*Ephesians 4:14, 15, NIV.*

◆ What do you see in this text? We are not to just ride the winds of teaching popular today. We are to speak God’s truth and grow up. We are to do it with love.

◆ Lets say you have a friend struggling with cheating on test, or clock punching, etc. Picketing his house with a sign that says he’s a sinner is not speaking the truth in love, and it won’t open him to the love of Christ either. Lets say a friend brings up a position of one of the candidates for the presidency. Changing the topic and not addressing politics and morality is not speaking truth in love either! I’m not saying that Christians should slam people when they are wrong. I am saying you and I need to find tactful ways to share God’s wisdom in our world. When we confront, it must not be hate-speech, it must be love-speech. That will take some thinking. Here’s an example.

◆ *In 1850, Abraham Lincoln's step-brother, John D. Johnston, wrote to him and asked, yet again, for a loan so he could settle some debts. On previous occasions Lincoln simply gave*

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*Johnston the money. But this time Lincoln responded with a "tough love" letter that included a helpful proposal. Dear Johnston: Your request for eighty dollars I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little you have said to me, "We can get along very well now"; but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now, this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether, since I saw you, you have done a good whole day's work in any one day.... This habit of uselessly wasting time is the whole difficulty; it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break the habit .... You are now in need of some money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it .... and, to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you, that for every dollar you will, between this and the first of May, get for your own labor ... I will then give you one other dollar .... Now, if you will do this, you will be soon out of debt, and, what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But, if I should now clear you out of debt, next year you would be just as deep in as ever. Affectionately your brother, A. Lincoln.*

◆C. Memorize the words of God. You can't mention what you don't know. And please don't tell me you're too old to memorize things. You do it all the

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time. You memorize commercials, sports team slogans, one-liners, jokes from YouTube. Well, memorize the Word. The more of the word you have hidden in your heart, the more the Holy Spirit can bring back to your mind in the time of need. Kind of like Forest Gump and his line, “Momma \_\_\_\_\_” (“always said”). He remembered what mom said and he was constantly applying it to his situation. It’s a good illustration really.

Memorize what Dad says, church! Then when you are meditating on a situation, the Holy Spirit can bring it to your mind.

◆ Should I or should I not buy that...? “Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”” Luke 12:15, NIV.

◆ Should I help that guy or not? “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” 1 John 3:17, NIV.

◆ Should I tell him off? “It’s harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with iron bars.” Proverbs 18:19, NLT.

◆ **Conclusion:** Do what your Master did in the face of evil. It’s clear Jesus had read the Jewish scriptures, isn’t it? When evil was at his door, the Son of God quoted the words of God and it had to leave. The sword of the spirit can change the world. The sword of the spirit can change your home. The sword of the spirit can fend off the demonic. If there is power in people’s words, just imagine what power God’s words have. Speak them. Quote them. Whisper them. Learn them. Share them.