

THE ARMOR OF GOD WEEK 7 — THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

Tonight we come to the final piece of the armor of God. For seven weeks we have been learning how to stand. We have talked about truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. And now Paul puts something in our hands: “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” There is something important about that phrase. He calls it the sword of the Spirit. That little phrase matters. The Spirit gives us the Word and teaches us to depend on the Lord as we face the battles of everyday life.

Some of us have spent this series recognizing battles we did not even know we were fighting. Lies about who we are. Compromise that has slowly become comfortable. Relationships divided by bitterness. Fear about the future. Condemnation from the past. And every week we have heard the same invitation: stand firm in the Lord and in his mighty power. That brings us to a question tonight: If the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, what does it actually mean to take it up? I want us to think about how God's Word becomes part of the way we actually live.

BIG IDEA: WE STAND AGAINST THE ENEMY BY KNOWING, BELIEVING, AND LIVING THE WORD OF GOD.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT — THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Paul writes Ephesians as a prisoner, and he closes his letter by reminding believers where their strength comes from. He calls them to be strong in the Lord. Ephesians begins by celebrating what God has done in Christ, moves into what it means to live as one new people, and ends with an invitation to stand against the devil's schemes. The armor

belongs to people who are already in Christ. Jesus has brought us near, and now Paul teaches us how to stand as people who belong to Him. In verse 17 Paul calls God's Word the sword of the Spirit, and in verse 18 he immediately calls believers to pray in the Spirit on all occasions. The Word and prayer belong together. The Spirit who inspired Scripture also enables us to receive its truth, obey it, and proclaim the gospel. Even Paul asks for prayer that he would speak the mystery of the gospel fearlessly. He knows he needs the Lord's help, and he asks the church to pray with him.

Notice how Paul moves from taking up the sword in verse 17 to praying in verse 18 and asking for boldness to proclaim the gospel in verses 19 and 20. This is a connected thought. The Word is given to a praying people, and that people are sent to speak the good news of Jesus. The battle is real, but Paul's vision of spiritual warfare is bigger than a private struggle against temptation. He wants the church to stand together and continue the mission of Christ.

Tonight we're going to see how God's Word reveals truth, transforms our lives, and equips us to stand.

SCRIPTURE READING — EPHESIANS 6:10–20 (NIV)

Read Ephesians 6:10–20 aloud from the NIV, emphasizing verses 17–20: “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Continue through Paul's call to pray for all the Lord's people and to proclaim the gospel fearlessly. Return to verse 17 after the reading.

POINT 1 — GOD'S WORD REVEALS THE TRUTH

Have you ever been driving with your maps app telling you exactly where to turn, and you were so sure you understood it that you ignored the next instruction? Then you realize the road you chose is taking you farther from where you intended to go. The problem wasn't that you had no directions. You had directions, but you decided your interpretation was better. I've found that following Jesus can expose that same tendency in us. We read something clear in Scripture, and then we begin making exceptions because we think our situation is different. That's why we need God's Word to keep bringing us back to the truth.

The enemy's schemes often begin with deception. Go back to [Genesis 3](#). The serpent asks, "Did God really say...?" The serpent begins by distorting what God said and raising doubts about His character. That strategy still works. Did God really say you need to forgive? Did God really say holiness matters? Did God really say you can trust Him? That's why deception can be difficult to recognize, especially when a lie sounds reasonable or uses religious language.

Jesus prays in [John 17:17](#), "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Scripture reveals God's character, exposes falsehood, and teaches us to recognize what is faithful. And Scripture also has a way of confronting the things we've allowed to settle in our own hearts.

[Hebrews 4:12](#) describes God's word as alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Sometimes I open the Bible hoping God will correct somebody else, and God starts with me. Second Timothy 3:16–17 gives us a helpful picture of why Scripture matters: it teaches, corrects, and trains God's people in righteousness. [Psalm 119:105](#) calls God's Word a lamp for our

feet and a light on our path. A lamp usually gives enough light for the next step. We learn to walk with God by trusting what He has shown us today.

GOD'S WORD BRINGS THE TRUTH INTO THE PLACES WE NEED IT MOST.

We cannot make our feelings the final authority over our faith. Feelings matter, but they do not always tell the truth. Some days you feel forgiven, and some days the past comes knocking. Some days you feel close to God, and some days you don't. But God's character does not change with your emotions. The Word tells us who God is, what Christ has done, and what faithful living looks like. So when we open Scripture, let's come ready to listen, even when the Lord is correcting something we've believed for a long time. Think about how Jesus spoke to His disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. They were confused and disappointed because the cross had shattered their expectations. Jesus opened the Scriptures and showed them how the story pointed to the Messiah. Their circumstances had not been misunderstood by God. They had misunderstood what God was doing. Some of us need the Lord to do that for us. We have built a whole interpretation of our lives around one painful moment, one failure, or one fear. As we sit with Scripture, the Holy Spirit can teach us to see our story in the light of Christ's story. That's one reason we need the whole counsel of God. A verse pulled out of context can reinforce what we already want to believe. A life shaped by Scripture learns to hear the Lord even when He challenges us.

POINT 2 — GOD'S WORD TRANSFORMS OUR LIVES

How many Bibles do you have? One on a shelf, one by the bed, one in the office, and another six translations on your phone? We have

extraordinary access to Scripture. It's possible to have Scripture within reach every day while giving it very little room to shape our decisions. I know how easily a busy week can fill up, even when our intentions are good.

A BIBLE THAT STAYS CLOSED CANNOT SHAPE A LIFE THAT'S WIDE OPEN TO TEMPTATION.

James 1:22 says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." James is speaking to believers who hear God's Word, and he calls them to put what they hear into practice. We can know that Jesus calls us to forgive and still nurse bitterness. We can know that Jesus calls us to generosity and still let greed rule our decisions. We can know that we are to love our neighbors and still refuse to love the people God places in front of us. Jesus calls us to a faith that takes shape in the way we treat people, make decisions, and respond to His leading. Imagine someone who hears a message about forgiving others on Wednesday night, then goes home and rehearses the same argument all Thursday. That person may have understood the sermon perfectly. The next step is to take the truth into that relationship. Maybe it begins with an apology. Maybe it means releasing a grudge and praying for someone who hurt you. Sometimes obedience requires a difficult conversation and wise boundaries. The Word becomes visible when the Spirit forms the character of Jesus in ordinary situations.

Psalms 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." The psalmist wants God's truth so deeply rooted in his heart that it guides his choices when temptation comes. Joshua 1:8

connects meditating on God's instruction with careful obedience, and Colossians 3:16 calls the church to let the message of Christ dwell richly among them. The Word is meant to be shared in worship, encouragement, teaching, and everyday relationships. We read the Word. We study it carefully. We meditate on it. We memorize it. And, by the Spirit's help, we obey it. We practice these disciplines because God's grace is already at work in us, drawing us closer to Him. In our Wesleyan understanding of holiness, God's grace does not leave us unchanged. The Holy Spirit forms holy love in us so that our lives increasingly reflect Jesus.

And let me ask you something: What is forming you right now? We are all being disciplined by something. The voices we listen to, the videos we watch, the habits we repeat, the conversations we entertain. If every other voice gets hours of attention and the Word gets whatever is left over, we shouldn't be surprised when those voices shape us. Maybe the Holy Spirit is showing you one habit that needs to change so you can give greater attention to the Lord.

GOD'S WORD SHAPES OUR HEAD, TRANSFORMS OUR HEART, AND MOVES OUR HANDS TO OBEY.

John Wesley wrote in the preface to his Sermons on Several Occasions, "O give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God!" He went on to describe opening Scripture in prayer and comparing passages with one another. That is a beautiful picture of a disciple who wants to hear and obey the Lord. Wesley loved the Word because he wanted to know and follow the God who speaks through it. [Historical source: John Wesley, Preface to Sermons on Several Occasions, section 5.]

This is why our discipleship framework is Head, Heart, Hands. HEAD: We learn and understand what God's Word teaches. HEART: We believe it and allow the Holy Spirit to transform our desires and affections. HANDS: We put it into practice through obedience, love, and service. All three belong together. We want disciples who know Jesus, love Jesus, and follow Jesus in everyday life.

Maybe your next step is to open the Bible before you open social media. Maybe it's reading with your family. Maybe it's memorizing one passage this week. Start somewhere. But don't stop at reading for information. Ask, "Holy Spirit, what are You teaching me about Jesus, and how do You want me to respond?" And remember, this is a lifelong journey of grace. The Lord uses His Word to convict us, encourage us, heal what has been wounded, and train us in righteousness. Second Timothy 3:16–17 says Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that God's servant may be equipped for every good work. Notice where that leads: a life equipped to do good. God is forming a people who love Him and love their neighbors.

POINT 3 — GOD'S WORD EQUIPS US TO STAND

Paul uses the Greek word **machaira** (mah-KHAI-rah), a word for a sword. He then calls it the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The Greek word translated "word" here is **rhēma** (RAY-mah), referring to a spoken word or utterance. Sometimes people try to build a sharp division between **rhēma** and **logos**, as though one always means a special personal revelation and the other only means the written Bible. The New Testament doesn't consistently use those words that way.

Here Paul's point is that the Spirit supplies God's Word for His people to receive and speak faithfully. Scripture gives us the content of God's truth, and the Spirit helps us understand it, remember it, obey it, and bear witness to Jesus. The sword belongs to the Spirit. The authority comes from the God who speaks.

Matthew 4 gives us the clearest picture. Remember where this story falls. Jesus has just been baptized, and the Father's voice declares Him to be His beloved Son (Matthew 3:17). Then the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness. Jesus has fasted forty days in the wilderness. He is hungry, and the devil tempts Him. Again and again Jesus answers, "It is written." When tempted to turn stones to bread, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3: we do not live by bread alone. When tempted to test God, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16. When offered the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worship, He quotes Deuteronomy 6:13. Jesus knows the Father's Word, trusts the Father's character, and obeys the Father's will. Notice that His answers come from Deuteronomy, from Israel's wilderness story. Israel had been tested in the wilderness and repeatedly struggled to trust God. Jesus enters the wilderness as the faithful Son, trusting the Father where God's people had failed. The context of His quotations helps us understand why these particular Scriptures matter. This is how the Bible helps interpret the Bible. Now church, here's the part I want you to hear. The devil knows Scripture. In Matthew 4, Satan quotes Psalm 91 to Jesus. He knows the words, and he knows how to use them to make temptation sound spiritual. I would not want to compete with the devil in a Bible trivia contest. He has had a long time to study what God has said. But knowing the words has never meant that he loves the God who spoke them. He twists Scripture in an attempt to pull Jesus away from obedience to the Father. And that is where our Big Idea becomes so

important. We are called to know the Word, believe the Word, and live the Word. Satan can quote Scripture, but he refuses to trust and obey the Lord.

THE ENEMY KNOWS THE WORD, BUT HE WILL NEVER SURRENDER TO THE WORD.

Jesus responds to the misuse of Psalm 91 by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. He understands the Scriptures as a whole and refuses to test the Father. That's what we mean when we say Scripture interprets Scripture. We read passages in context and allow the full witness of the Bible to guide our understanding. We bring our interpretation to Jesus, who shows us the character of the Father. We should never use a Bible verse to excuse pride, justify sin, manipulate people, or demand that God do things our way.

YOU CANNOT STAND ON A WORD YOU REFUSE TO TRUST.

When temptation comes, God's Word reminds us that God is faithful (1 Corinthians 10:13). When condemnation comes, Romans 8:1 reminds us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. When fear comes, we remember the Lord is with His people. When suffering comes, Romans 8:38–39 reminds us that nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ. When we stumble, we return to the Savior who remained faithful and has won the decisive victory. James 4:7 tells believers to submit themselves to God and resist the devil. Notice the order: submission to God comes first. First Peter 5:8–9 also calls us to be alert and resist the enemy, standing firm in the faith. And in John 15:5 Jesus reminds His disciples that apart from Him they can do

nothing. The call to stand is a call to remain close to Christ. Now return to Ephesians 6:18. Paul says to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. He calls us to stay alert and to pray for all the Lord's people. This isn't a disconnected final instruction. It is how a church stays dependent on God while wearing His armor. A congregation can know its theology, have strong programs, and still become spiritually careless if it stops praying. We need the Spirit to help us put the Word into practice.

THE SWORD BELONGS TO THE SPIRIT, SO WE MUST LEARN TO FIGHT ON OUR KNEES.

Then Paul asks them to pray for him. He is an ambassador in chains, and his request is remarkable: pray that I will proclaim the gospel fearlessly. He doesn't ask them to pray that his ministry will become comfortable. He wants courage to make Jesus known. That brings us back to the shoes of the gospel of peace from earlier in the series. We stand firm, and we remain ready to go. The Word strengthens our witness, and prayer keeps our hearts dependent on the Lord. When the enemy tries to silence the church through fear, the Spirit gives us courage to speak of Jesus with humility and love.

GOSPEL CONNECTION — THE WRITTEN WORD AND THE LIVING WORD

Everything comes back to Jesus. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The written Scriptures bear witness to the living Word, Jesus Christ. His faithfulness in the wilderness matters because He is our Savior, the One who obeyed the Father all the way to the cross. Where humanity listened to the serpent,

Jesus obeyed the Father. Where we have sinned, Jesus remained faithful, even to death on a cross. And through His resurrection, sin and death do not have the final word.

Colossians 2:15 tells us that Christ disarmed the powers and authorities, triumphing over them through the cross. Christ has already won the decisive victory. His Word keeps calling us back to His promises, His presence, and the hope we have in Him.

THE CHURCH STANDS STRONGEST WHEN IT STANDS IN THE VICTORY OF JESUS.

BOTTOM LINE

If somebody asks you tomorrow what we learned at church, remember this: God gives us His Word so that we can know the truth, believe His promises, and live faithfully through the power of the Holy Spirit. That's how we stand in Christ.

CHALLENGE — TAKE UP THE WORD

[HOLD UP A PHYSICAL BIBLE. PAUSE.]

Church, I can carry this Bible everywhere I go and still refuse to let it speak into my life. I can place it on a shelf, underline favorite verses, and post Scriptures online. I want this Word to follow me into the conversations I have, the decisions I make, and the way I treat people when nobody else is watching.

LET THE WORD YOU READ BECOME THE LIFE YOU LIVE.

This week I want to challenge you to choose one passage of Scripture. Read it every day. Ask what it teaches about God. Ask what it reveals

about your own heart. Pray through it. Memorize a verse. Then take one concrete step of obedience. Give the Lord room to speak, and respond to what He shows you. His grace is at work in you, making you holy.

INVITATION / ALTAR RESPONSE — CONSECRATION

Tonight we are closing seven weeks in Ephesians 6, and I want to invite us to respond together. We began by hearing Paul's call to stand firm in the Lord and in His mighty power. We learned that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. People are not our enemy. We talked about truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and now the sword of the Spirit. And Paul brings us to prayer, because every piece of this armor calls us to depend on God. This is a moment for consecration: setting ourselves apart for the Lord, offering Him our lives again in response to His grace.

Some of us have been believing lies about God or ourselves. Some have grown comfortable with compromise. Some are carrying division into their homes and relationships. Others have lived under fear or condemnation. And some of us have allowed so many voices to fill our days that we can barely hear the truth of Scripture anymore. The Holy Spirit is inviting us to surrender those places to Jesus. If you have never trusted Christ, this invitation is also for you. He welcomes sinners to repent, believe the gospel, and receive new life.

[INVITE THE CHURCH TO STAND. ASK EVERYONE TO OPEN THEIR HANDS BEFORE THE LORD. ALLOW A MOMENT OF SILENCE.]

Lord, buckle us with TRUTH. Guard us with RIGHTEOUSNESS. Make us ready with the GOSPEL OF PEACE. Strengthen our FAITH. Secure

us in SALVATION. Teach us to receive and obey YOUR WORD. Keep us PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT.

[INVITE THOSE DESIRING PRAYER OR RENEWED CONSECRATION TO COME FORWARD. PASTORS AND PRAYER TEAM READY. LEAVE SPACE FOR WORSHIP AND PRAYER.]

Father, in the name of Jesus, we come as Your people. Thank You that You have not left us defenseless. Clothe us in truth. Guard our hearts with the righteousness of Christ. Fit our feet with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Strengthen our faith to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Secure our minds in the salvation Jesus has won. Teach us to take up the sword of the Spirit, Your Word. Forgive us for trusting our own strength and for giving other voices greater authority than Yours. Holy Spirit, sanctify us. Form in us a hunger for Scripture and a love that obeys. Protect our families, heal divisions, renew our courage, and make us faithful witnesses of Jesus. Keep us alert and prayerful for all Your people. We surrender ourselves to You again, in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

WEEKLY COMMISSION

Tomorrow, before the other voices of the day become loud, open God's Word. Choose a passage, read it slowly, and pray over it. Ask, "Lord, what are You showing me about Yourself, and what step of obedience are You inviting me to take?" Carry that truth into your family, workplace, neighborhood, and conversations. Pray for one person who needs the good news of Jesus, and ask the Spirit for an opportunity to speak with love and courage. Church, let's be a people who know the Word, believe the Word, and live the Word.

BLESSING

May God the Father establish you in His truth. May Jesus Christ, the living Word and victorious Savior, guard your hearts and lead you in holiness. May the Holy Spirit fill you with faith, keep the Scriptures alive in you, and give you courage to proclaim the gospel. And church, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Stand firm in the strength and victory of Jesus. Amen.