

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 6.17b: The Word of God is a sword wielded by the Spirit of God

Theme: Preach the Word and the Spirit of God will use that Word preached as a sword to cut sinners to the heart.

This is the second (of two) message on the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit.

Remember what we saw in our last message:

- The sword (the Word of God) is the sword of the Spirit: (Heb 4.12-13) It is the Spirit of God who ultimately wields the sword of the Word of God.
 - ✓ When we preach the Word, the Spirit uses the Word as a sword to “cut sinners to the heart.”
 - ✓ It's the same principle as the sower and the seed: The power is in the seed, not in the sower; we are called to sow the seed (preach the Word) and the Spirit will give that seed increase.
- Our sword is our offensive weapon: It's the only weapon we have been given to advance the cause of Christ over the cause of the enemy.
 - ✓ (Php 1.12) Paul is speaking of our army's advancement: The furtherance of the gospel (the Great Commission). How is that accomplished?
 - ✓ (Php 1.13-17) We advance the cause of Christ by speaking the Word—by preaching Christ.
 - ✓ (Php 1.18) Regardless of the motives of the preacher, when the Word of God is preached, the Christian will rejoice because he knows the Spirit will use it as a sword to further the gospel.
- And this is what brought us to our last point of study with regard the sword of the Spirit...

Our Sword is the Enemy's Target:

- Firstly, we saw that our enemy will attempt to remove your sword from your possession.
 - ✓ In the Dark Ages (AD 500-1500), the Catholic clergy removed the sword of the Spirit from the common man by maintaining the liturgy in Latin (and maintaining the common man illiterate).
 - ✓ Today, the clergy are doing the very same thing, but with the “original languages” (Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic) and the plethora of modern versions.
- Secondly, the enemy will attempt to shut you up (to make sure you don't draw your sword to use it in battle; “keep it holstered!”).
 - ✓ And here is where I would like to pick up our study and continue where we left off...

I. This is a tactic of our enemy that we see throughout Scripture.

A. (1Thes 2.16; context: v13-16) If we do not speak to sinners, sinners will not be saved.

1. (Act 4.15-21; 5.28, 40) This was the enemy's tactic in the early church: shut the preachers up!
2. (Luke 4.16-30) This what we see in Jesus' ministry: His opponents hated what He said, reacted emotionally to it, and sought to shut Him up (and they eventually succeeded... for three days).

B. You see the same thing throughout the careers of the Old Testament prophets:

Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits. [Isa 30.10 cf. 2Tim 4.3-4]

But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not. [Amos 2.12]

C. And this same tactic of our enemy exists today! People today (even those who are called by God's name) say to those preaching the Word: **Preach not!**

II. This tactic to shut you up often comes in the form of *pragmatism*.

A. Here is a quote from an article written by a pastor about street preachers:

You're standing on the corner yelling Bible verses at people passing by. One in a thousand prays the "sinner's prayer" and immediately a chorus of halleluiahs confirms the power of the God's Word. How many of those "transformed lives" ever darkens the door of church? ... How may Jehovah's Witnesses have genuinely come to faith because they got hit in a fire fight of Bible verses? How many people are ever argued into Heaven? How many atheists or agnostics finally saw the light because of a Bible grenade that exploded nearby?

B. People (even those who would call themselves Christians—followers of Christ) will oppose witnessing and the preaching of the gospel by saying things like:

1. *"It doesn't work... It has the opposite effect that you want... You are turning people away from God..."*
2. And it's often true (which is why this tactic is so effective)! Think about it...
 - a) What is our desire? We desire to see sinners saved. But what is the result (more often than not) of our witnessing efforts? People get upset, angry, and "turned off."
 - b) (Mat 7.13-14) This should not surprise us! *Few* there are that are truly saved. And that's not an excuse to be purposefully weird and offensive (a stumbling block to the message).

C. Scripture (both Old and New Testaments) testifies to the same. For example:

1. (Jer 1.18-19) Jeremiah experienced the same thing: He was sent by God to preach a message "against" sin, apostasy, and idolatry.
2. (Jer 20.7-8, 18) And his preaching didn't work, it bore no fruit; it had the opposite effect he desired.

D. Understand this: You are not called or expected to be *effective*; you are called and expected to be *faithful*.

1. (2Cor 4.3-6) The preaching of the gospel is shining the light of God's Word into the darkness of man's sinful heart.
2. (John 3.19-21) Most men love their darkness (they enjoy their evil thoughts and deeds).
3. (2Cor 2.14-17) When we preach the Word (v14, 17), in every place (!), it will have a sweet savour to a few, but a savour of death to most.
 - a) Why? Because it exposes man's wickedness and exalts God's holiness. And lost man *loves* his sin (2Tim 3.2, 4; Rom 1.32) and *hates* his Creator (Rom 1.30).
 - b) It's like the story of Ehud in Judges 3.15-22:
 - (1) Ehud made a dagger that had two edges and he thrust it into the belly of Eglon, king of Moab (Israel's oppressive enemy).
 - (2) (v17) The Bible says that Eglon was a very fat man.
 - (3) (v21-22) When Ehud stabbed fat Eglon with the two-edged sword, "the fat closed upon the blade... and the *dirt came out*."
 - (4) That's what the sinner has to face when confronted with his sin that is exposed by the preaching the Word of God.
 - (a) The Spirit will take the Word and, as a sword, will stick that Word into his belly; and He will not take it out.
 - (b) (Heb 4.12-13) The Word exposes the sinner's dirt—all the filth he hides inside.
 - (c) And the sinner then has a choice: Die to self and turn to Christ (repentance and faith) or die in his dirt like Eglon (condemned as an enemy of God).
 - c) Bob Jones, Sr. said: *"You can judge men by their reaction to the Word preached."*

E. The preaching of the Word (the gospel) has *never* been popular, nor will it ever be so.

1. So, don't look to results to motivate you.

- That's pragmatism, and the enemy will use that to discourage you from taking your sword out of the the scabbard; “*Keep it holstered! It doesn't work!*”.

2. Rather, look to the Lord and to what He has commanded you. Be faithful and live for the Judgment Seat of Christ.

III. This tactic to shut you up also comes in the form of intimidation.

A. Most often this takes of the form of fear and nervousness (spiritual battles and opposition to intentional evangelism).

1. How many of us have not witnessed one time or another simply because we were scared or intimidated to do so?

- Fear is usually a good gauge of the intensity of the spiritual battle of the moment.

2. There is no real way to get over this (every soldier feels it when going into battle).

3. But we can control it and get the victory over it (much like the soldier) through training and experience.

a) Learn how to witness and then go do it (and continue doing it).

b) The more you learn and the more you “practice,” the less intimidation you feel.

c) Recommendation: Todd Friel's *Terrified* mp3 CD and accompanying manual.

B. Sadly, though, this intimidation also comes from other believers who, for whatever reason, would oppose the preaching of the gospel and the Word of God.

1. They will call us names: “*Socially-challenged folks... compensating for [our] personal insecurities... incapable of engaging in ordinary conversation.*”

2. They will attempt to intimidate us (bully us) intellectually. For example, the aforementioned pastor in his article against street preachers wrote the following:

You're standing on the corner yelling Bible verses at people passing by... I'm just saying you'd better keep [your weapon] holstered unless you know exactly what you're doing. Take it out and use it with great skill when you are absolutely convinced that this is the moment that God has ordained. Just because you've got a nice Bible and have learned some neat stuff about it, don't go shooting it all around unless you know exactly what you are doing.

a) First: There are no “ordained moments” or “divine appointments.”

(1) Sometimes, yes, it's a lot easier than other times to witness to someone. But, most often it's incredibly uncomfortable and awkward.

(2) Jesus did not tell us to wait for “ordained moments” to preach the Gospel. He commanded us to go and preach the gospel to every creature everywhere.

b) Secondly: (Luke 8.38-39) The Lord expects even the newest, most ignorant of converts to preach His Word to the lost.

(1) Do you think you will ever “know *exactly* what you are doing”? Do you think you will ever know the *exact* words necessary for each and every witness situation? Do you think you will ever know *exactly* how to answer every objection to Christianity and the gospel?

(2) I graduated with a BSBA (4.0 GPA) from a State university. I graduated from a four-year Bible institute. I earned a Masters degree in biblical studies and theology from an accredited Southern Baptist Seminary. I've read my Bible dozens of times, in two different languages. I know biblical Greek. I've read hundreds of books and written five. And...

(a) I “stand on a box on street corners yelling Bible verses at people passing by.”

- (b) Now I certainly have much more to learn about the Bible and evangelism. I can't answer every objection to the gospel and Christianity. I wish I could!
 - (c) But, how much more do I need to learn and know before I can unholster my weapon and use it?
- (3) Here's my point: Don't let other believers intimidate you into not witnessing! It's not about how much you know or don't know!
- (a) You can learn how to witness biblically in less than an hour.
 - (b) Again, I would recommend you get Todd Friel's *Terrified* (it's like \$10.00).
- c) And don't let others intimidate you into shutting up because you need to wait for some "ordained moment" to witness.
- (1) It's *not* about "ordained moments" and "striking just the right spot with just the right words."
 - (2) It's about being *faithful* to boldly proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (3) Go preach the Word! It is the sword the Spirit will use to advance the cause of Christ in this world.

Conclusion:

The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded all His followers (old and new; novices and experts) to preach the Word!

- (Php 1.12-18) The power is in the seed, not in the sower.
 - ✓ The sword is wielded by the Spirit who will use the Word preached to cut the sinner to the heart, expose the dirt and filth inside him, and call him to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Word of God is our only offensive weapon.
 - ✓ We advance the cause of Christ by preaching that Word to anyone and everyone, anywhere and everywhere.
 - ✓ And it's not just about street preaching and street evangelism.
 - ✓ It is about speaking to any lost person, anywhere: friends, family, co-workers, people at school, or people we try to intentionally witness to with a gospel tract.

(Jer 1.4-9) Jeremiah was a man very similar to us, in circumstances very similar to ours.

- (v4-6) He was a young man with no formal theological training (no training with the sword).
- (v7-9) But that does not matter because his task was simple: Go, speak the Word of God to sinners.
- (v8) Don't be intimidated!
- The one thing God expected of Jeremiah is what He also expects of us: Faithfulness; obedience to His command to go and preach Christ to every creature.

Preach the Word and the Spirit of God will use that Word preached as a sword to cut sinners to the heart.