

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 26 May 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Christian's Armour (Part 3)

Ephesians 6:17-19

In the early 1990's, an evangelist named **David Benoit** did a series of radio addresses entitled "Fourteen Things Witches Hope Parents Never Find Out about Witchcraft." In these messages, Pastor Benoit told about an experience that he had had while preaching on the subject of witchcraft at a local church. After he had finished preaching, a teenage girl, who was trembling from head to foot, came up to him. She told him that she had, in a time of trouble during that past year, called on the devil, and made a pact with him. She had promised the devil her *soul*, if he would just get her out of the trouble that she was in. Well, the demons had meant business. The girl raised her skirt slightly, and exposed her calf; and on her calf was a frightening picture of a demon. She told Pastor Benoit that neither she, nor any other human being, had made this mark on her leg. It was a supernatural mark, which a demon had made! Needless to say, she was scared out of her mind, and was convinced that she was hopelessly doomed to the Lake of Fire!

However, what she didn't realise is that the devil had tricked her. Satan's demons had convinced this girl that by making a pact with the devil, she would be handing over her soul to him for good. What they didn't tell her is that even though she had gone to church all her life, and had attended a Christian school, she *already* belonged to the devil *before* she made this pact. Why? Because she had never been born again! She was a church-goer; but she was lost. Pastor Benoit assured her that although she had given the devil a great stronghold in her life, she was *not* beyond forgiveness and salvation. He assured her that there was nothing keeping her from being saved, if she would only surrender her heart to Jesus Christ.

By the way, if *you* have never stopped trusting in your good works, and placed your trust in Christ to save you, it doesn't matter how often you may attend services at Redemption Baptist Church: you are still lost, and separated from God. What you need is to be *saved*; and *it is Christ alone that can save you!* You must repent of your sin, and trust in Christ alone.

There are millions of people out there who are just like that young lady. Multitudes of people don't realise they already belong to Satan. They have no idea that they are imprisoned in invisible strongholds, which Satan has erected in their minds. Our task, as Christian soldiers, is not only to stand firm against Satan's attacks: we are also to be *advancing* against the enemy, and rescuing perishing souls from Satan's prison house. In order to do that, we must put on the armour of God.

Thus far, we've examined all the *defensive* pieces of armour—the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. We've also examined the shoes of the "*preparation of the gospel of peace*." However, this morning, we will look at the two *weapons* that God has given us. These weapons are the "**sword of the Spirit**" and "**prayer in the Spirit**." The title of this message is *The Christian's Armour (Part 3)*.

Read Ephesians 6:10-19.

I. The Word of God (17b)

(Read verse 17.) Brethren, I am afraid that we too often doubt the power of this Book. We live in a world in which the Bible is deemed “non-scientific”; and thus, we often allow the enemy to intimidate us to “throw aside our sword,” and to do battle without it. Too often, we attempt to persuade people to receive Christ *without* the use of Scripture. Too often, we use philosophical or rational arguments, or mere personal experiences, but no Scripture.

Now, it certainly isn't wrong to defend the Bible's scientific accuracy. There are *many* scientific statements in God's Word; and every one of these statements is dead-on accurate, because it is given by divine inspiration. There are countless lists of historical persons and places in the Bible; and as the years go by, archaeologists keep turning up these names and locations, and proving the Bible to be correct. We can, and should, point out these “infallible proofs” to people. Yet, *we must never make these arguments without the Bible*. Without the sword of the Spirit, we have nothing. Ultimately, scientific proofs of the Bible won't persuade anyone. Only the Bible can pierce a sinner's heart, convict that person of his need of salvation, and *change* that person. If a person will not accept the authority of the Bible, then all the scientific proofs and personal testimonies in the world will not persuade him to repent.

Read Luke 16:19-31.

Brethren, if we desire to see people saved from sin and death, then we must cling to “*the sword of the Spirit*.” It is the *only* thing that will change the leopard's spots, and melt the heart of stone. We must hide God's Word in our hearts, and be ready to use it at a moment's notice. As we give an answer to people, we must *always* assert the authority of Scripture. By the way, when you are dealing with an atheist or an agnostic, you don't need to spend all your time trying to “prove” that there is a God. You need merely *assert* the existence of God, straight from Scripture—and then start showing them what the Bible says about sin, righteousness, judgment, and the Gospel. The first verse of the Bible begins with the simple statement, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” God didn't waste any time in trying to “prove” to us that He exists, did He? He doesn't *have* to “prove” it. Nature itself screams that there is a God to whom we are accountable; and our inward consciences inform us that we have violated His law. The Bible itself *tells* us about the testimony of nature and conscience! As you are talking with people, don't merely point to nature and say, “There must be a God who created all these things”: show people what the *Scriptures* say about the testimony of nature! Don't merely say to the lost, “You know, deep in your conscience, that there is a Judge”: tell them what the *Scripture* says about the testimony of their conscience. The *Scripture* will drive home the point like a piercing sword, because it is the Word of the living God. It is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword!

Read Romans 1:18-20 and 2:1-16.

Read 2 Timothy 2:15.

More times than I can remember, I have quoted Scripture to lost people; and they have, with irritation, told me to “Stop quoting the Bible, because I don't believe the Bible!” I'm ashamed to say that there was a time, years ago, when I was intimidated by this demand. “After all,” I would think, “This person isn't going to listen to my appeal from the Bible, because he thinks that the Bible is a fairy tale.” If I were dealing with a Roman Catholic, I would think, “How

will I be able to persuade this person from the Bible, when he believes that the Bible is not to be meddled with by a layperson, and that only the pope and bishops can interpret it correctly?" Many times I would find myself thinking, "I'll have to use some other apologetic argument to open this person's mind, before I can even begin to quote from the Bible."

Brethren, do you know what is happening when people demand that you stop quoting the Bible to them? Two things are happening. First of all, they are uttering a lie that has been planted in their minds by the enemy. (The lie the enemy is telling them is that *you* are a simpleton, because you can't think for yourself.) Secondly, Satan is whispering doubts into *your* mind about the power of God's Word, so that you will be intimidated into putting down your sword. Satan knows that God's Word is powerful; and he doesn't want you to use it. He wants you to doubt its power, or even its truthfulness! In **Matthew 16**, we are told that Satan planted a doubt in Peter's mind about what Jesus had just said to him. Jesus had just said that He was soon going to be put to death by the chief priests and scribes, and then rise again in three days; yet, Peter actually had the brass to contradict the Lord. He said, "***Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.***" Jesus knew that this thought had been placed in Peter's mind by the enemy; and so, He immediately turned to Peter and said, "***Get thee behind me, Satan!***"

Christian, when doubts enter your mind about the power of God's Word, cast down those thoughts immediately. Don't be ashamed of this Book! Do not doubt its transforming power! In **Romans 1:16** Paul said, "***For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.***"

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

The Scriptures are all we need to find the knowledge of salvation, and of how to live our lives. God's Word is all-sufficient, and all-powerful. No matter how irritated someone may be by your non-compromising stand upon the Scripture, don't recoil. Don't let down your sword. No matter how hard people may try to make you feel like a narrow-minded simpleton, do not be disheartened! Hold onto your sword, and do not let go of it for one instant! Keep referring back to the Scriptures—just as Christ did when Satan tried to tempt Him to sin.

Read Matthew 4:1-11.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He said, "***It is written.***" All three times that Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus took His stand upon Scripture. By the way, you'll notice that Satan had the audacity to twist the meaning of **Psalm 91:11-12**! Satan is good at deceiving people by misinterpreting God's Word; and he will deceive *you*, too, if you do not know this Book well!

Now, if I were to cover every aspect of God's Word—its power, its authority, its miraculous inspiration, its immutability, its preservation, and so on—I would probably be preaching on the subject for the rest of this year! I am not going to do that: however, I *would* like give you a "panoramic view" of the power of the Word of God.

How powerful is God's Word? Well, first of all, **it was by the Word of God that all things were created**. Just think about that for a minute! In the beginning, there was absolutely nothing, except God. There was no time, no space, no energy, no universe. Yet, in an instant, God said, "***Let there be light***"; and there was light! For the next six days, Almighty God

simply spoke the words, *“Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters...let the dry land appear...let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven,”* and so on: and everything instantly came into being! *That* is the power of the Word of God. It is absolutely staggering! **Second Peter 3:5** says that *“By the Word of God the heavens were of old.”* By the way, **Jesus Christ Himself** is called *“the Word.”* He is called by this name because it was by His Word that all things were created.

Read John 1:1-3.

Secondly, the Word of God sustains (upholds) all things. Do you realise that without the sustaining power of God’s Word, nature itself would fall apart? **Second Peter 3:7** says, *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store.”* **Colossians 1:17** says that Christ is *“before all things, and by him all things consist (literally, “hold together”).”* He upholds *all things* by the *“word of his power.”*

Read Hebrews 1:1-3.

How powerful is God’s Word? It is so powerful, that **it cannot be destroyed!** No matter how hard man may try to suppress, hold down, or annihilate the Word of God, it cannot be done. Why? Because the Bible is not the word of men, but the Word of God! If there were any book that should not have survived through the ages, it is the Bible! Countless emperors, totalitarian dictators, and bloodthirsty popes have burned it, and mercilessly tortured and slaughtered those who dared to own a copy of it. Even in the free world today, multitudes of godless people are shouting it down, mocking it, and doing everything in their power to discredit and ban it from society. However, they cannot get rid of it, because the God who breathed the words of Scripture has promised that His word will never be destroyed. In **Matthew 24:35** Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* In **Matthew 5:18** Jesus said, *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* In **Psalms 12:6-7** David wrote, *“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of fire, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.”* In **1 Peter 1:24-25** Peter wrote, *“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever.”*

We’ve examined the creative power, the sustaining power, and the enduring power of God’s Word; but please consider also the **destructive power of God’s Word.** In **James 4:12**, James says this about the Lord Jesus Christ: *“There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.”* If you’d like an example of the destructive power of the Word of God, consider the destruction that Christ will unleash upon His enemies at the Battle of Armageddon.

Read Revelation 19:11-21.

The sharp sword going out of Christ’s mouth is, of course, figurative. It represents God’s Word. The massive armies of the Antichrist will be wiped out immediately, with a single word from the Lord Jesus Christ. *That* is how destructive God’s Word is upon His enemies!

By the Word of God, all that are in the grave will one day hear Christ’s voice; and they that have *“done evil”* (those who have not received God’s gift of salvation) will be resurrected

“unto the resurrection of damnation.” (Jesus said this in **John 5:28-29**.) They will then stand before God’s judgment bar, where they will hear the words, **“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; I never knew you”** (**Matthew 7:23; 25:41**). They will not be able to escape that sentence of eternal destruction. God’s Word will stand!

Now, the good news is that the same Word which will bring forth multitudes to the resurrection of damnation will also bring forth many to **“the resurrection of life”** (**John 5:28-29**). The most wonderful aspect of the Word of God is its *life-giving* power. Jesus Christ (who is called “The Word of God”) said, **“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”** **John 1:4** says of Jesus, **“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”** All who trust in Christ are given a wonderful new life in Him; and this life lasts for eternity. All who repent and turn to Christ are **“born again”** by the power of **“the word of God.”**

Read 1 Peter 1:22-23.

The promise of the new birth is exceedingly good news. Yet, the best news of all is that one day, all who have trusted in Christ will receive resurrected, sinless bodies; and it is by the power of the Word of God that this will happen. Jesus said, **“The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”**

Should you be unsaved, please know that the Scripture that you are hearing this morning is absolutely necessary for you to be saved! **Romans 10:17** says, **“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”** Allow God’s Word to sink into your heart, and convict you of your sin. Allow God’s Word to draw you to the Saviour. Be born again today by the Word of God, that liveth and abideth forever!

To those who are saved, I would say this: never forget that **God’s Word has all power!** This Book has the power to convict men of sin. This Book is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This Book has the power to wash away sins, and transform lives. It has the power to wash lustful thoughts out of the mind. It has the power to blow beer cans out of the refrigerator. It has the power to change raging demoniacs into sober-minded, godly people. It has the power to change weak, timid believers into fearless witnesses for Christ. This Book has *all* power. Love this Word, Christian. Cherish it. Hide it in your heart. Know it inside and out, so that you may be ready to proclaim it in season, and out of season.

II. Prayer (vv. 18-19)

(Read verses 18 and 19 again.) The **“sword of the Spirit”** (the Word of God) is absolutely necessary in our fight against the devil. However, there is another weapon which is just as necessary as God’s Word. That other weapon is prayer. Interestingly enough, Paul didn’t compare prayer to any physical weapon, such as a spear, or an arrow; he simply calls it **“prayer.”** He says, **“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.”**

Prayer is absolutely necessary in our war against Satan’s kingdom. Without it, we have no power from above. I could spend a month of Sundays talking about all the elements of prayer (such as praise, confession of sin, asking for daily needs, asking for power over temptation, and so on); but the particular element of prayer that Paul is emphasizing here is *supplication*.

(Read verse 18 again.) What is “*supplication in the Spirit*”? The word “supplication” simply means “praying for others.” Supplication involves praying for other Christians, that the Lord would give them strength and courage in the battle; and it also involves praying for the unsaved, that the Lord would open their eyes, and translate them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. A Spirit-filled Christian doesn’t spend all his prayer time praying for himself: he spends much time praying for others.

Now, you’ll notice that Paul instructs us to pray with “supplication *in the Spirit*.” This is just one of several Scriptures where we are commanded to pray “*in the Spirit*.” For example, in **Jude 20**, Jude instructs Christians to pray “*in the Holy Ghost*.” What does this mean? Well, I think the best Scripture to explain this is in **Romans 8**.

Read Romans 8:26-27.

What is Paul saying? He’s telling us that there are times when God’s people don’t even know what to pray for, because we are so distraught and confused. In those times, the Holy Spirit prays to the Father *for* us. He prays *through* us to the Father. Yet, it isn’t merely in times of deep distress that we should “*pray in the Holy Ghost*”: we should be praying in the Holy Ghost at *all* times. We *must* rely on the Spirit to tell us when to pray, and how to pray.

Do you realise what this means? This means that prayer is a work of God *through* us! When we are *truly* talking with God, the Holy Spirit is praying *through us*, to God the Father, in Jesus’ name. When you are truly filled with the Spirit, all three members of the Godhead are involved in your prayer. You are merely a vessel through which God accomplishes His will.

Now, I am often asked this question: “Pastor, if God knows exactly what He intends to do, and if He is going to do His will exactly when and how He intends to do it, then why do we need to *pray* for God to do that thing?” Well, here’s the reason, in a nutshell: **God wants us to be dependent on Him!** Also, God desires **to accomplish His will through our prayers**. That is amazing, is it not? Let’s look at an example of this truth in the book of **Acts**.

Read Acts 12:1-19.

Stop and think about this situation for a minute. Obviously, it was not God’s will for Peter to be put to death by Herod. God had many more years of service for Peter to accomplish. He had two letters of Scripture for Peter to write. It had been God’s plan, from eternity past, to release Peter from Herod’s prison on this night. Yet, the members of the Jerusalem Church didn’t know what God’s will was. They knew that Peter would one day be killed for his faith in Christ, because Jesus Himself had told him so; yet, they didn’t know whether it was God’s appointed time for Peter to die. *They* didn’t know the future. All they knew was that the Spirit of God was leading them to pray for Peter, even though the situation looked hopeless.

Yet, even this is not the most amazing part of this account. The truly amazing part of this story is that Peter *would not* have been released from prison **if** God’s people had not obeyed the Spirit’s leading, and prayed for him! In order for Peter to be released, God’s people had to be filled with the Spirit, yield to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and pray. Of course, their faith certainly was not perfect. They were *surprised* when Peter actually showed up on their

doorstep! Yet, despite their small faith, they obeyed God, nonetheless. They prayed for Peter, as God had directed them to do; and God answered their prayer.

Now, how can it be that a sovereign, all-powerful God accomplishes His will through the prayers of sinful, fallible people like us? When you think about it, it's mind-boggling. What if the Christians had been too lazy to pray? What if they had been as serious about attending this prayer meeting for Peter as many modern Christians are about attending Wednesday night prayer and Bible study, or Sunday evening prayer and Bible study? What if they had figured that Peter's days were up, so there was no use to pray about it? Peter probably wouldn't have been delivered. *Then* what would have happened? We'll probably never fully understand the answers to all these questions. However, what we do know is that God *will* always have a small remnant of faithful believers; and He *will* continue to accomplish His will through the prayers of His people. God *does* respond to our prayers; yet, the burden is on us to pray!

Christian, are you praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit? And with what kind of *fergency* are you praying? Paul talks about this matter, as well. Let's read those last couple verses again. **(Read Ephesians 6:18-19.)** Paul says, "***Watching thereunto with all perseverance.***" The word "watch" carries the connotation of watches in the night, such as a soldier or a sentry would have. In Paul's day, the safety of an entire city lay in the hands of night watchmen. The watchman had to stay awake. He had to be on guard at his post. This is the way that *we* should pray, Christian. Jesus warned the disciples, "***Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.***" We must be sober and vigilant. **Job** arose early in the morning every day to pray for his children, that they would not sin and curse God in their hearts. Job was *relentless, fervent, and persevering* in his prayers. We should be the same way.

As we close this morning, there is one more aspect of prayer that we need to talk about: and that is *for whom* we should pray. We know, of course, that we should be praying for the lost. The Scriptures tell us this repeatedly. We should be praying for our unsaved spouses, children, parents, siblings, and other loved ones. We should be praying for our town. We should be praying for our leaders, and for our nation at large, that souls would turn to Christ.

However, we also need to pray for each other. Paul *specifically* mentions this in **verse 18**. He commands us to pray "***for all saints***" (Christians). He also urged them to pray for himself! **(Read verse 19 again.)** Now, that is a telling request. Why? Because Paul was a naturally zealous person! He was not lacking in natural courage or forthrightness. Nonetheless, Paul asked the Ephesians to pray that the Lord would give him utterance and boldness to speak the Gospel. Paul knew that natural, fleshly courage would fail him; and he knew that his preaching, no matter how eloquent, would fall flat if he were not filled with the Spirit of God. The same is true of us, brethren. We *must* be praying in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints! We must pray for each other, that God would give us utterance to open our mouths boldly, so that we might make known the Gospel.

Conclusion: Christian, there is a war going on. People all around you are a hair's breadth away from slipping into an eternity without Christ. Are you wielding the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Are you praying with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit? Are you watching with all perseverance for all saints? I would also ask: **Are you saved?** You may not have ever made a pact with the devil; but you don't *have* to make a pact with the devil to be in his family. You *already* belong to him, because you are a sinner. In order to be translated from Satan's family to God's family, you must be born again. You must repent of your sin, and place your complete trust in what Christ did for you on the

cross. In simple faith, you must ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and to be your Lord. If you have never been saved, won't you come to Christ today, and receive eternal life?