

INTRODUCTION

Many of you have heard of John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, which, for many years was the second best-selling book in the English language. Of course, the Bible always has and always will be the best-selling book in the English language. *Pilgrim's Progress* is a beautiful allegory of the spiritual warfare we are all involved in. There is a character in the book called, Christian who is on a journey, as we all are as believers. In his book Bunyan pictures this titanic, supernatural, invisible conflict going on all around us. To me, it seems Christians today are unaware of it. In the climax of his book he writes these words, “Apollyon” that’s the Bible word for destroyer or Satan “seeing his opportunity began to gather up close to Christian and wrestling with him gave him a terrible blow! Christian fell and his sword flew out of his hand. Apollyon then said, ‘I am sure to win now!’ But as Apollyon was preparing to deliver the final blow to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his sword and he caught it and Christian said, ‘Rejoice not against me, O my enemy! When I fall, I shall rise.’” (Micah 7:8) “And with that Christian gave him a deadly thrust which made Apollyon fall back as one that has received a mortal wound. Christian perceiving this thrust again, said, ‘Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.’” (Romans 8:37) “With that Apollyon spread forth his dragon’s wings and sped away so that Christian saw him no more.”

Would you like to know how you can be just as victorious against the devil and his demons? Ephesians 6 gives us exactly the equipment we need and how to use it. Beginning in Ephesians 6:13, Paul says, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then.” Then here’s the equipment we talked about last week. “With the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all of this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

What do you do when you get dressed up for battle? Verse 18 tells us “pray in the Spirit.” That’s next week “know your assignment.”

I. THE SHIELD OF FAITH DIVERTS SATAN’S ARROWS

Today, I want us to examine these other two pieces of our armor: A shield and a sword. Of course, the first one is the shield of faith. The shield of faith diverts Satan’s arrows that he’s always shooting at us. Roman soldiers had two different kinds of shields. One was a small, round shield about the size of a garbage can lid often used in hand-to-hand combat, but the word Paul uses here is not for that small shield—it is for a large shield. It is the Latin word *scutum*. We actually derive one of our English words for *door* from it, because it was large about the size of a door! It also doubled as a stretcher. You could put wounded soldiers on these shields and take them out of battle. This shield was about 4 feet tall by 2-1/2 feet wide. It was very effective for Roman foot soldiers to hold it up, because the enemy often dipped arrows in pitch and ignited them before firing them against the opposing army. Of course, if these arrows landed in buildings made of wood or straw, they would ignite the buildings, but of course if the arrows landed on a soldier; it caused a mortal wound—both from the arrow itself and from the fire. The

Roman soldiers would hold these shields up and the fiery darts would be extinguished.

Paul is saying our shield is faith. He says the evil one, Satan, is shooting fiery darts at us all the time. What are some of these arrows? The Bible says, "Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from that noisy crowd of evildoers. They sharpen their tongues like swords and aim their words like deadly arrows." (Psalm 64:2-3) Some of these arrows shot at us are invisible, like temptation, anxiety, fear, depression and discouragement. Those are all arrows the devil shoots at us but he also shoots angry words from other people at us; bitter words such as criticism. People betray us. They disprove our friendship for them and so sometimes the devil uses people to say angry, hurtful words at us and these are like fiery arrows.

When you were a kid, you probably heard "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." That's not true. Sometimes hateful words are more painful than sticks and stones. The Bible says these arrows are going to come. Notice Paul did not say, "Hold up the shield so the arrows won't be shot at you." We are going to be a target. Every believer is going to be shot at. The Bible says the shield of faith is effective to divert these arrows. You're going to be criticized. You're going to be tempted. Anxiety and pressure are going to be sent at you, but faith will cause those painful arrows to lose their effect against you.

1. Hold on to God's promise

We're talking about faith in God. There are three things you ought to do with your shield. First, hold on to God's promise; that's what faith is. You don't need to know more about faith; you exercise faith every day of your life. Maybe you just don't know it. When you put a stamp on a letter and put it in the mailbox, you are exercising faith in the United States Postal Service. It may or may not get there, but you are putting faith in the USPS. You'll go to a doctor you have never met before and sit down in a little room and you'll even take off your clothes for him. Now that's faith! He'll examine you and tell you that you have some kind of an illness you never even heard of before. He'll write out a prescription that you can't even read and you'll take it to a pharmacist you've never met before and they'll give you a medicine you can't even pay for. You'll take that medicine home and digest that medicine into your body. Now every step of the way you are putting faith in the doctor, faith in the pharmacist, and faith in the medicine. You are exercising faith all the time. You don't need more faith. You know what faith is. A while ago when you came in here and sat down in this building, you put faith in that pew that it would hold you up. You are resting your whole weight on it right now. You are exercising faith. It's like I am standing on this platform made out of wood. I believe it will hold me up. If there was an extension on this platform made out of Kleenex, do you think I would walk out on it? Absolutely not! I wouldn't trust it. That's what faith is. So it's not faith in faith, and it's not just any old kind of faith it's faith in God! That's what the shield is, faith in all of God's promises. When he says, "I'll never leave you or forsake you." Do you believe that? That's your shield. The Bible says, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and I am helped." (Psalm 28:7) Whenever you can stand and say, "God, I am trusting you. I am not leaning on my own understanding." That's the shield of faith.

2. Link up with God's people

A second thing to do with your shield of faith is link up with God’s people. Each Roman shield had a couple of crooks on each side, so a soldier going into battle could literally hook his shield with the shield of the soldier next to him. They could form a phalanx, which was a living wedge. That’s how the Roman armies conquered the world—because they had such highly developed military strategy. They often placed their spears between the two shields and they either made a wedge and stood firm and still as the opposing armies came against them or else they moved forward as a wedge into battle. The important thing was *they didn’t fight alone*. They linked up with other soldiers.

If you are still trying to be a lone ranger in the Christian life, you’re going to find that every day you will stumble and fall and get discouraged, because you are trying to be a lone ranger Christian. That’s the beautiful thing about an army. We have allies. We have fellow soldiers to link up with, that’s what Green Acres Baptist Church is; that’s what every church is. We are here to link up with you to go into battle together. You receive strength from me. If I fall down, you are beside me to pick me up. If you fall down, I am there beside you to pick you up. We are arm-in-arm marching into battle. Some of you come to this church as a spectator, sitting in the balcony or on the back row and haven’t joined this church. You say, “You know my relationship with God is personal just me and God.” Well you’re right. The *relationship* is, and that’s what salvation is—only between you and God. No wonder you are giving in to sin. No wonder you still have some of those habits that frustrate you. No wonder that you are backslidden and don’t do the things you want to do. It’s because you are out there all by yourself. Link up with this church with these other soldiers and say, “I want to be a part of this church. I need help.”

3. Stand firm in God’s power

The third thing to do with your shield is stand firm in God’s power. This shield of faith says absolutely nothing about your ability. This shield of faith is saying, “I’m standing firm in God’s power!” Let me give you a great example of that from the Old Testament. One day there was a giant named Goliath standing on the other side of a ravine. The Bible says he was 9 feet, 6 inches tall! He would bump his head on the bottom of the balcony if he walked in here today. The Bible says, “He had a spear whose handle was 14 feet long. The point of the spear alone weighed 15 pounds.” That’s about the weight of a college shot put. “The spear itself weighed 40 pounds. He had on armor weighing over 125 pounds.”

We have a lot of tall people in our culture today. Sean Bradley of the NBA is 7’6”. Archeological evidence indicates that everybody was shorter in biblical times. The average height of a man was about 5’3”, so a six-foot-tall man was a giant! The Bible says King Saul stood head and shoulders above everybody else. He was probably about six feet tall and here comes a 9’ 6” giant saying, “One of you come over here and fight me!” Naturally, they all stood back cringing in fear.

That’s the picture of so many Christians today. It may be you because for every one of you trying to grow and progress in the Christian life there is an ugly giant who stands up and says, “You gotta get past me, buddy!” It may be an attitude, or some filthy habit, or a grudge, or some temptation that takes you down time after time, but that giant is standing there mocking you and laughing at you saying, “You can’t go until you deal with me.” The problem is you’re trying to

do it in your own strength with positive thinking or self-analysis meditation, etc. Instead, use the power of God.

Young David comes out, picks up five smooth stones and approached Goliath, but I want you to know his faith was not in those stones, in his skill with the sling—his faith was in God. This is what you need to say to your giant. David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me!” David didn’t say, “You know I really hope I win. I’m going to try to do my best.” Faith said, “This day I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or by spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s.” (1 Samuel 17:-4547) Now that’s faith. That’s faith when you can approach your giant and say, “This day the Lord is going to give you over to me! It’s not my battle; it’s not my skill, but it’s faith in the Lord. The battle belongs to the Lord.” So the shield of the Lord is absolutely essential. Hold it up! Hold on to God’s promises. Link up with God’s people and stand firm in his power.

II. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT DISABLES SATAN’S ATTACK

There’s another tremendously important weapon. That is our offensive weapon, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. According to this passage of scripture, the sword of the Spirit disables Satan’s attack. Satan is constantly attacking us but the sword of the Spirit will disable his attack every time. This is an accurate depiction, because there were basically two kinds of swords. There was that long broad sword the cavalry and some foot soldiers used against opposing armies. It was a long, heavy sword that required two hands to swing. The problem was, once you swung it, if you missed, it took a lot of energy to stop and swing it again. The Roman armies revolutionized warfare by using this small sword that they kept in a scabbard. They would drop their spear and pull this short sword out. The Greek word here is *machaira*, which is this short sword. They could wield this sword very easily. So this is talking about a believer who has a firm grasp of the word of God and knows how to use it. Here’s the problem: When it says the word of God, some of you don’t know the word of God it’s talking about. I didn’t know this for years. This was a revelation to me. I want to teach you something about this word today. Some of you already know it for others of you it will be a new revelation.

1. *Logos*: Entire, written, living word

In the New Testament there are two different words for this “word” of God. The first is the word *logos*. *Logos* is the entire, written, living word. It’s all the treasury of truth in the Bible and it is alive. Many of our English words come from the word *logos*. When we talk about biology, we are talking about the concept of the study of life. The entire concept of the word of God is the *logos* and the Bible says it’s alive. Hebrews 4:12, uses the word *logos*. “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Inward and outward. The *logos* is so powerful, it cuts both ways.

Not only does the word of God convict other people when you share it, but the word of God always convicts us when we read it. Everyone in this room who is a believer became a believer when the sword of the Spirit, the *logos*, penetrated your heart and said, “You’re a sinner! You can’t save yourself.” That’s one edge of the sword.

2. *Rhema*: specific, personal, spoken word

When you share the word, that’s the other edge of the sword. It divides between soul and spirit bone and marrow but frankly, when Paul uses the phrase, “the sword of the Spirit” in Ephesians 6, it’s not the word *logos*. Some of you are defeated because you are trying to use the *logos* as the sword against the devil. When he says “use the sword of the Spirit,” he’s not talking about this. Some people foolishly think there is something magical about the words printed on these pages and anytime they are attacked by the devil, all they have to do is hold up this book. That’s why some of them keep it on the dash of their car. That’s the *logos* and that’s not the word Paul uses here. He uses the word in Ephesians 6 *rhema*. *Rhema* is in contradistinction to the *logos*. The *rhema* is specific, personal, spoken word. It means something that is more specific. It is real and personal to you and it is spoken. Romans 10:17 uses *rhema*. “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word [*rhema*] of Christ.” This book *logos* doesn’t produce faith, but *rhema* produces faith and it is powerful against the devil.

If you still have trouble understanding this, let me give you a couple of examples. A good friend of mine was chairman of our deacons in one of the churches I served. Royce was a good Christian. He was in the hospital facing triple bypass surgery in Birmingham and he was afraid. He was shaking he was so afraid and anxious as he faced the surgery scheduled for the next morning. To make matters worse, that evening there was a terrible ice storm and his family couldn’t get to the hospital to be with him. The physicians and staff had to use 4-wheel drive vehicles to get to the hospital. The night before he said he was so afraid and knew nobody would be there to support him that he said he was desperate. He reached into the drawer beside his hospital bed and he pulled out the Gideon Bible and began to read the book of Psalms as he regularly did each evening. He was reading Psalms 57, and he was saying, “God I just need a promise from you.” He read Psalms 57:7—he’d read the 57th chapter of Psalms many times. The King James Version says, “My heart is fixed, O Lord.” and he said when he read those words it was as if God was saying, “That’s your promise.” Actually, the word there means my heart is “established” or “settled” but to Royce it was God saying, “Claim the promise. Your heart is fixed.” Royce closed the book, put it back in the table, and went to sleep. The next day surgery went fine. He had confidence and faith. The *logos* he had read many times before suddenly became *rhema* and the fear and anxiety that the devil was attacking him with was dispelled.

3. The *logos* becomes *rhema* when a potential promise in the Word becomes real to you in a time of special need

The *logos* becomes *rhema* when a potential promise in the word becomes real to you in a time of special need. Has this ever happened to you? When you read a passage of scripture that you have read time and time again and suddenly, it just reaches out and grabs you by the lapels and slaps you in the face like one of those Aqua Velva commercials and you just get a wake up call and you say, “Whoa!” That’s the *logos* becoming *rhema*. When that happens, it is a sword you can

use to dispel fear, anxiety, depression and anything the devil is shooting at you.

I’ve had a lot of experiences like that in my life. I remember in my first church out of seminary they were running about 70 in Sunday School when I went. God began to bless us in a special way. I remember they paid us \$1,100 a month to pastor that little church. That was my first fulltime church and we actually were making less money in that church than we were in seminary, because then I was working at the airport and my wife was teaching school. She quit to have our children and that was our only income, but we loved the work there and God began to bless us. Within about 18 months the church doubled and we were averaging over 150 in Sunday School. We went 32 straight Sundays at this little church where somebody got saved during the worship service. God was blessing it. After a couple of years the deacons got together and met with me (There were only six deacons). They said, “Brother David, we need to pay you more. You’re doing a good job here. We’re going to raise your salary \$100 a month.” I said, “Okay, if you want to.” And I was thanking God for that. So they put it in the bulletin the proposed budget and mailed it out. There was this man in the church who used to be the part-time music guy. His name was Robert Kinney and I didn’t know he had any kind of beef or anything, but boy, when he got that in the mail he got angry! He came stomping down to the church office and I remember him coming in and standing in front of my desk slamming that budget down on my desk saying, “I don’t think you’re worth what we are paying you now! And I certainly don’t think you deserve another \$100 a month!” He said, “Not only that when we vote on it this Sunday, I’m going to make sure all my friends vote against it too!”

Robert was a barber in town. Ladies, you may not know what goes on in a barbershop, but the guys go in and gossip and talk about other people and get the latest news. I know nothing like that ever happens at beauty parlors but that’s what us guys do. Well, when he said I’m just a little preacher out of seminary and nobody had ever really gotten ugly with me or mad at me before (and I like for people to like me) I was so uncomfortable, I didn’t know what to do.

That night I was reading Isaiah 54, one of my favorite chapters and I came to verse 17 and it just jumped off the page. “No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.” I just said, “Okay, Lord. I claim that promise.” At that moment, all the things I was suffering from were gone. I didn’t know what was going to happen, but I was no longer afraid. The *logos* had become the *rhema*. The very next morning my phone rang and it was Robert’s wife. She said, “Brother David, Robert is in the hospital.” He had had a stroke that night and the only thing affected was his mouth, and he could not utter one word! Immediately, I went his hospital room. I just tried to be a pastor to him and I just prayed for him for God to heal him, and in about 3 or 4 weeks, God did heal him and he was completely restored and could talk. He never said another word about that conversation we had, but he became one of my best buddies. Several years later, when I went back there to preach at a homecoming, he met me at the door and threw his arms around my neck saying, “Glad to have you back!” The *logos* can become a *rhema* a promise in a special time of need for you.

BECOMING SKILLFUL WITH YOUR SWORD

To have that kind of *rhema* in your life takes long, diligent, faithful study. There are six ways you can become skillful with the sword.

1. Hear it

Hear the word. I commend you for being here today to hear the word preached. I commend all of you who are in Sunday morning Bible study Sunday after Sunday to hear the word of God taught, listen to it on the radio or on television. Every time you hear it taught you are becoming more skillful, but that’s not enough. If the only exposure to the word you have is coming to church and listening to me preach or coming to Sunday morning Bible study, you will be defeated every time.

2. Read it

Just read it. I imagine some would be embarrassed if I asked everybody in this room who had ever read the Bible completely through from Genesis to Revelation to stand up. There would probably be some of you who have claimed to be Christians for 30 or 40 years and you’ve never done it. How many of you have read the Bible through half a dozen times? Because that’s still just kindergarten. Are you reading the Bible? Is there any book or magazine or newspaper you read more than the word of God? You become skillful only if you hear it and you read it.

3. Study it

What’s the difference between reading it and studying it? When you read it, you just hold the Bible in your hand, but when you are studying it, you usually have a pen or a highlighter or a separate sheet of paper where you write down insights and trace verses and connect all the verses together—you go a little bit deeper and as Paul said to Timothy, “Study to show yourself an approved workman that won’t be ashamed.” Every time you study the word, you are sharpening the sword of *rhema*.

4. Meditate on it

That means think about it. The Bible says, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the way of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2) Let the word of God saturate your mind and your heart.

5. Memorize it

Why should you memorize the Bible? So you can brag about how many scriptures you can quote? No. The Bible says in Psalms 119:11 “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.” The more of the word you hide in your heart, the less prone you are going to be to sin, because the *rhema* will be there ready and prepared.

6. Quote it

Of course you can’t quote it if you haven’t memorized it; you can’t memorize it unless you meditate on it; you can’t meditate on it unless you study it; you can’t study it unless you read it.

So it starts by quoting. If you want to become skillful and you want to have victory over the devil, that’s what you have to do.

CONCLUSION

Do you think when Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness (Matthew 4) that Jesus could have just snapped his fingers and killed the devil? Jesus could have annihilated him. The devil would have disintegrated. Do you think Jesus could have just pushed a heavenly delete key and devil, demons, hell, evil, wickedness would have been deleted? Sure he could. I believe he could easily have done that. So why didn’t he? He was trying to show Christians in Tyler, Texas how to have daily victory over temptation and the devil. He even showed us he could do it in an advanced state of weakness. He fasted and prayed for 40 days and when the devil came to him, he said, “I’m not going to use my omnipotence.” He didn’t make lightning come out of his finger and burn the devil—although he could have—but if he had done that you and I would have said, “I can’t do that. I don’t have any lightning bolts in my finger.” Instead, he defeated the devil the same way we can defeat the devil. Satan said, “If you’re the son of God, you can turn those stones into bread.” Jesus whipped out Deuteronomy 8:3 (he didn’t have the physical book of Deuteronomy; he had it hidden in his heart) “Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” The devil ran off. He came back later. The devil takes Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and says, “Jump off.” The devil tried to quote scripture. He pulls out his little sword. He says, “It is written” but he misquoted scripture. You study it. The devil always perverts the word of God. “Jump off! Your angels will catch you.” Jesus whipped out his sword. “It is written.” Deuteronomy 6:16. “Do not test the Lord your God.” The devil ran off. Finally, Satan takes him to a tall mountain and says, “Look. Here’s all the riches, the wealth, the fame, the human power. Bow down and worship me and it will be yours!” Jesus pulled out the sword again. “It is written. ‘Fear the Lord your God, serve him only.’” (Deuteronomy 6:13) “Get behind me Satan!” And Satan left him alone.

If Jesus could do that with Deuteronomy, what do you think *you* could do with the gospel of John? Romans 8? “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37) Arrows are going to be shot at you this week. Hold on to this faith. The devil and the demons will attack you this week—they are attacking you right now. Use the *rhema* the word of God and you can have victory in the spiritual battle.

OUTLINE

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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes