

The Strategy of the Sharpened Sword

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 November 2024

Preacher: Dr. Daniel Heeringa

[0 : 0 0] Ephesians chapter 6, 58-year-old Mike Tyson fought a YouTuber the other night that was 30 years younger than him.

I remember the Tyson of old. My neighbor had HBO. We didn't allow such filth in our home, so we'd go up there and watch it, at least boxing.

Tyson had a contract with HBO, and because he was hardly challenged in a fight, he fought about every six weeks.

Now, normally a heavyweight fighter won't fight, but every four to six months at the most, sometimes a year in between. But Tyson had an uppercut that was deadly.

He didn't throw one the other night, but he made millions. He mostly played defense in the shortened rounds of the eight-round fight.

[1 : 0 3] It wasn't much of a fight. Tyson hit him early and hit him hard and scared him, and it kind of scared Tyson because they had a deal that if Tyson lasted four rounds, he'd make an extra few million dollars.

When Tyson realized he was able to knock the boy out, he laid up. And so, interesting, but not very fun to watch. So far, we've spent time talking about the armor of God, and everything we've talked about has been defensive, keeping your hands up, protecting yourself.

But the reality is, we've learned that our battle is not against other people, that the real war that's going on, the real war is one that's spiritual.

And our best defense is a godly lifestyle. Our best defense is a commitment to truth, a path that is paved with the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to have a certainty of our salvation, and to have the faith to trust God completely, that he'll do for us in a world that we desperately need him to lead us.

Knowing all those things and doing all those things does us a world of good against the enemy. In Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10 through 20, there's only one offensive weapon that's mentioned.

[2 : 3 5] And I want to talk about that this morning. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 17 says this, Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

I want to focus for a few minutes on the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That is our weapon of warfare. Particularly, this word for sword in the Greek speaks of a 12 to 18 inch dagger.

That was carried in a scabbard on the side of a soldier. Be sure to have your weapon.

Now it's interesting that the word that is used here for the Word of God, typically the word that is used for the Word of God is logos.

Logos is what you see in John 1 when it talks about Jesus being the Word. It talks about how he's the Word of God. As a matter of fact, logos is used 330 times in the New Testament to speak of the Word of God.

[3 : 48] But here there's another word used. And that other word is rima. Rima speaks of the spoken Word of God. It's used multiple times in the New Testament as well, but not near as much.

But it speaks of a directly spoken Word. So if you put that in context where we are, he is saying take up the spoken Word of God as a weapon.

In other words, speak the Word of God. To speak the Word, you have to know the Word. Therefore, I want to give you a few techniques, a few swipes, a few stabs that you need to be familiar with.

If you want to win a knife fight, bring a gun. But if you want to defeat the enemy, know the Word of God and speak it.

Now, anyone who has a weapon needs to become familiar with that weapon. If you decide today that you've never owned a gun, but you want to go buy a gun, and you go buy a gun, you need to learn your weapon.

[5 : 03] Just having one is going to do more harm than good. You need to know your weapon. Folks, you need to know your weapon.

Like a ball player needs to spend time playing ball. If he or she is going to be good at it, they've got to play it. They've got to know it. They've got to be familiar with it.

And in the same way, if you're going to win with a strategy against the evil one, in the war in which we face, you have to spend time in God's Word. So I want to ask you this morning to commit with me to follow three steps to have a proper response when the enemy engages us.

Three steps. First is to adhere to the Word of God. Believe the Word of God. Believe it. 2 Timothy 3, verse 16 and 17 says, All scriptures breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Now, if you believe that, you'll trust the Word of God. You'll be changed by the Word of God because it reproofs and it rebukes.

[6 : 24] Think about it. Have you ever read God's Word or had it read to you? And had a verse just stuck in your life?

I mean, it just spoke to you. It just seemed to come to life as if the breath of God himself was in that. Well, he is. And I mean, you just, it just, it's just like he was more than stepping on your toes, just digging into your life.

That's the reproof of God's Word. It corrects. You want to know what pattern to walk your life in?

Study God's Word and it'll guide you. It'll also train you. It'll also equip you for whatever the task may be. Like a weapon strapped on for warfare.

And I want you to listen to the effectiveness of the Word of God. It says it in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, when it says, For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of souls and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[7 : 33] It gets to the heart of the matter. Do you want to know why you always have a struggle with spending the proper time in God's Word daily?

Because it gets to the heart of the matter. And either one or two things happens. And Satan don't want us to get to the heart of the matter. He don't want us to spend time in God's Word.

So he'll come up with any kind of thing to distract us along the way as he possibly can. He'll keep us out of God's Word as best he can.

But then also, when we begin to read God's Word and it begins to speak to our lives, a lot of times we'll close the book. We don't want to deal with it. The reality is it speaks to where we are.

It's effective. When the Holy Spirit shows us our waywardness of our thoughts, the waywardness of our intentions, by us spending time in God's Word, we tend to have one of two responses.

[8 : 35] We either change our lives in accordance with God's Word, or either we close the book. And if you want to win the real war, don't miss the opportunity afforded you by the conviction of the Holy Spirit through God's Word.

Respond with obedience and let it stick. And I want to clarify something. The Word of God will bring conviction. The Holy Spirit's at work in the Word of God, and He'll bring conviction in your life.

But if God convicts you of a sin, and you don't respond to that obediently, do you know what? The next time you'll be a little more numb to it than you were last time. And before long, you can hear the truth that you know to be true, but you're hardened to it.

You're callous to it. And you no longer listen to it. Romans 1 talks about it, how Satan loves to darken the mind.

And that's often what he'll do. He'll get us out of the light of God's Word, and he'll darken us along the way.

[9 : 45] We need to respond with obedience. We need to let it stick. We need to adhere to God's Word. The second thing is, we need to adjust to the Word, adjust our lives to the Word. God uses the spoken and written Word to speak to our hearts, and we need to adjust our lives to that.

Because God can use His Word to save us. 1 Peter 1, verse 23 and 25 says this, You have been born again, not a perishable seed or of unperishable, but through the living and abiding Word of God.

For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flowers of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, but the Word of God remains forever, and this Word is the good news that has been preached to you.

Now, what does it say? It says that we are saved. We're born again by the living and abiding Word of God. So you may ask me, what does that have to do with spiritual warfare? Do you know what Satan strategizes the most over?

He wants to keep lost people lost. If one never comes to the Lord Jesus and is never saved, the devil claims that life.

[11 : 07] Now, Christ says that the proclaimed Word of God, through the parable of the sower, He says that that can be snatched away and is not able to take root, and that's what Satan loves to do.

God uses the sharing and the proclaiming of His Word to change lives. It's effective. It works.

It's by the Word of God that we are led to the Lord Jesus for salvation. God uses the Word to save us. God uses the Word to cleanse us.

John chapter 15, verse 3 says, Already you are clean because of the Word that I've spoken to you. Ephesians 5 says that because Christ loved the church, He, quote, gave Himself up for her that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word.

It's through the Word of the Holy Spirit, excuse me, it's through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit speaks, leading us to repent, leading us to plunge into the forgiveness of God.

[12 : 18] God uses the Word to cleanse us. Not only that, God uses the Word to confirm us. When doubts come, turn to the Word of God. Turn to the Word of God.

John 5, verse 24 says, Jesus said, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Do you want to be a shouting Christian instead of a doubting Christian? Or if you want them quiet folks, at least a certain Christian instead of a doubting Christian? Adjust to the Word of God.

It's life-changing. But do what we need to do. Do what we need to do in our spiritual battle.

And that is that we need to adhere to God's Word. We need to stick to it. We need to adjust our lives in accordance with the Word of God. However, we also need to attack with the Word of God.

[13 : 24] I told you it's an offensive weapon. And as we went through this study, particular scripture verses have popped up again and again. And I don't apologize for that because I think God embedded those scriptures in the Word so that we would have them.

And these are scriptures that I advise you to memorize. I advise you to write them down. I advise you to post them in particular places. Keep them ever before you.

Put them on the dash of your car. Don't look at them when you're driving down the road. But when you stop at a red light, read that passage of scripture. Put them on the mirror in the bathroom if you need to.

Put them ever before you. Leave them before you. I mean, this is our artillery. This is what we take into battle. This is what we prepare ourselves by. I'm convinced that these passages will pull you out of the grip of what Satan tries to get us into.

I'm convinced of that. John 10.10 says, the thief comes but for. But for means this is the only reason he comes, but to steal, to kill, and to destroy. Christ has come that we might have life and have it more abundantly.

[14 : 31] But the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. And if you look at the larger context of that passage, Christ is saying that he's watching over his sheep. And he will not let a wolf come in to take them.

And friend, that's what the devil looks like. He's like a wolf. His demons are like a pack of wolves circling and growling and trying their best to steal, kill, and destroy.

That's his only purpose. I just heard a couple of days ago that the NBA has told their players to be on guard because international gangs are crossing into America and are looking at the NBA and the NFL schedules to see when the stars are not at home, invading their home, stealing their stuff.

And they said, you better make sure that you've got alarms. And we advise, the NBA said, we advise you to get a watchdog. I thought I'd put you on high alert.

That might distract you in the fourth quarter today, you know? That is nothing less, as a matter of fact, it's evidence of what the devil's already doing.

[15 : 57] It's just another physical sign of a spiritual battle. Let me give you another verse to sharpen your sword.

1 Peter 5, 8, and 9. Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

Resist him. Firm in your faith. Remember what I said earlier? Adhere to the word of God. Let it stick. And then adjust your life in accordance with it. How? By being watchful.

By being serious. Let's quit being flippant about spiritual matters. Don't be compromised in the midst of it. We need to rest in that.

We need to understand the seriousness of it. We don't need to be freaked out by it. We don't need to be scared of it. He that is in us is greater than he that's in the world. We can rest in that. We can rest in that, but we better rely upon God's word and we better pay attention to what's going on.

[17 : 04] When we have a slip in our life, it's a place for there to cause a foothold, for the devil to get us in a foothold, which leads to a stronghold, which leads to a habit, which leads to destruction.

He looks for places to get in. And we need to seriously analyze our lives by the Holy Spirit of God working with us through the word of God to see what it is in our lives that could cause weakness and could cause us to distract our walk with God.

And some of us don't have to work hard on that. We know what that is. It's ever before. Like David said of his sin, he said, it's ever before me. It's like somebody face guarding you in basketball. It's ever before me.

It won't let go. And some of you know exactly what your difficulty is. How do you know that? Because the word of God shows that. And because the spirit of God has led you in that.

So let's get serious about this thing. Be sober minded. Be watchful. We've got somebody after us. And we need to just be prepared. It gets better.

[18 : 14] So don't freak out on me. It gets better. Let me give you another one to sharpen your sword. These verses are kind of like a whetstone. They just sharpen the sword. They just make your weapon that much sharper.

James 4, 7-8. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he'll flee from you. Draw near to God and he'll draw near to you. I've told you. This is one of my favorites. I've hung my hat on this.

Not only in the pulpit but in my own life in recent days as we went through this. Because I just keep thinking about resist the devil and he'll flee from you. That's a promise from the word of God. Resist the devil and he'll flee from you.

Now I told you a few weeks ago that he may flee from you for 30 seconds. Okay? And then come back. Resist him. Resist him and he'll flee from you.

It may be five minutes later and he'll come back. Resist him and he'll flee from you. It may be an hour later and he'll come back. Resist him and flee.

[19 : 12] It may be another day. Resist him. You see what's happening? The gap's getting larger, folks. And we need to be persistent in this matter.

Resist the devil and he'll flee from you. That's a promise from the Lord but we got to resist him. We can't entertain him. We can't let those things take over.

Read it and know it. Resist and he'll flee. Another one. 1 Corinthians 10, 13. I want you to hear me on this because I hear a lot of justification from folks.

No temptation has overtaken you that's not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

Now I love this passage because of two things. One is because no temptation has overtaken you that's not common. And one of the great deceptions of the evil one is to tell us that somehow we're an exception to the rule.

[20 : 15] That yes we have a struggle in this area but if people only knew what our circumstances are don't you know your circumstances are different than anybody else's and because your circumstances are so much different that somehow your sin is justified because if anybody else was in your situation then your sin would be justified in their life too.

But nobody else has experienced what you've experienced. There's a Greek word for that. Baloney. If we were to write down the places that the devil loves to tempt us on a whiteboard in here there's not a whiteboard in Pickens County large enough for us to use.

But if we were to take those things and consolidate them into common common areas you would find there's not that many areas out there.

There is not that much difference in us folks. No temptation has seized you except what's common to us all. We deal with it. We deal with it in different levels. We deal with it in different places. Some of us are greater weaknesses to other areas and all that stuff but we're all being tempted by the same thing.

And not only that but he's provided the way of escape every time. You can't say like Flip Wilson said in the 70's the devil made me do it.

[21 : 27] He can't make you do it. God provides you a way out. You need to know that. And in the battle of temptation I want you to know God's providing you a way out.

There's a way out. Don't say I couldn't help it. It's not true. He'll provide the way out. The devil will try his best to convince us we're the only person in that situation that somehow our sin is justified and that we have no other choice.

I had to do it. Hogwash. It's not true. It's not true. He tries the same old tricks on all of us and when he finds a weakness he just hangs out there.

He'll just stay there. One more. 2 Corinthians 10 4 and 5 Man For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and I want you to get this last phrase and I want you to learn it and I want you to live by it.

[22 : 50] I want me to live by it. Take every thought captive to obey Christ. Take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Every discouraging thought that you have take it captive to obey Christ. Every immoral thought that you have take it captive to obey Christ.

Every indecent thought that you have take it captive to obey Christ.

Every defiled thought that you have take it captive to obey Christ. Every disparaging thought that you have, take it captive to obey Christ. I said a couple of weeks ago, it's like whacking a mole. You just got to keep whacking to knock it all out.

But I'm telling you, through the Holy Spirit of God, he will train us through his word and through his activity in our lives to take every thought captive to obey Christ.

[24 : 32] Those dark areas of your life don't have to exist anymore, friend. This is a war we can win. It's already been won. We're just fighting skirmishes that we don't have to fight. The power of God's in us and he uses his word to do it.

He gives us the strength that we need. Trust the word of God. It is your weapon against the warfare that we face. Trust the word of God.

And we live in a day, because I've had personal discussions with folks on this, we live in a day when folks are trying to compartmentalize and disparage the word of God to justify their action.

Stick to the word of God. Trust it. Trust it. It's smarter than science. It's more accurate. I know some of you did better in science than I did and you're skeptical. I'm telling you, trust the word of God. Trust the word of God. And when things seem chaotic, God's not an author of chaos. So you just go back to the word of God and trust the word of God.

God's not an author of God. You just go back to the word of God. When Billy Graham was a young man, he held a crusade in Pennsylvania and it did not go the way that he wanted it to go.

[26 : 09] It didn't go as well as he thought it should. And he was down about it. I want you to get this now. He was discouraged about it. And about the same time, a friend who had, he knew from years ago, who had studied at a liberal theological school, Princeton University, started placing doubts in Billy Graham's mind about the word of God.

It was the summer of 1949. And Billy was invited to a Christian retreat in the mountains outside of Los Angeles.

The place is called Forest Home. And when he got there, he began to struggle over these issues. One night he walked out in the woods and he set his Bible on a stump and he cried out to God.

And he said, Oh God, there are many things in this book I don't understand. There are many problems with it from which I have no solution.

There are many seeming contradictions and I can't answer some of the philosophical and psychological questions that are being raised. Falling on his knees and being moved by the spirit of God, he cried out, Father, I'm going to accept this as thy word by faith.

[27 : 36] I'm going to accept this and I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions, beyond my doubts, because I believe this is your inspired word.

And Graham said he stood up, his eyes were burning and the power of God was all over him. And Billy Graham says a major bridge was crossed that day as he rested against that stone.

The next day he preached at that retreat center and 400 people got saved. The one who had invited him, Henrietta Mears, one of the great biblical authors, excuse me, authors of biblical issues of that day.

God used Henrietta in a powerful way. She said, I've never seen him preach like that. I've never seen him preach with that authority. Just a few weeks later, he held the historic Los Angeles crusade.

It was scheduled for three weeks. However, God got in the middle of it. And that crusade went on for eight weeks where he preached to 350,000 people and 3,000 people were saved.

[28 : 55] That event in Los Angeles is what the media grabbed the attention of the media. And Graham's ministry was never the same again.

All because he took God at his word. Do you want to win the spiritual battles that you face? Strap on the sword of the word of God.

God uses his word. And victory can come in our lives when we trust his word. When we live by his word.

When our lives are marked by the word of God. With every head bowed and every eye closed, I ask you this morning, Have you ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ?

I'm not going to assume everybody that walks in a First Baptist Church has ever surrendered their life to Christ. And I want you to know if you haven't, he'll meet you exactly where you are.

[30 : 02] He'll forgive you of your sins and he'll come into your life. If you'll just commit your life to follow him. And ask him to cleanse you. Maybe you're here and you have done that, but you've done it privately.

You've never done it publicly. You've never acknowledged Christ through baptism. By his example and by his commission, he's told us that's the first step of our obedience in Christ. If you've never been baptized as a believer, I encourage you to come, be obedient, follow Christ.

Maybe God's leading you to be a part of First Baptist Church. God's doing wonderful things here. And I know he's working in the hearts and lives of many folks. And I just encourage you to simply be obedient, follow his lead.

We'll guide you in that process, but follow his lead. For everybody else that's here, is there stuff in your life you need to lay down before the Lord?

Hindrances and strongholds and difficulties in the midst of these battles that we face that you need to lay down before the Lord. And I'm thankful that you can lay them down right where you'll stand in just a moment.

[31 : 06] You can do it at this altar. I'll be happy to pray for you. I have no idea how God spoke to you. I just know what he told me to do. And I just ask you to be obedient. Just do exactly what he calls you to do.

Nothing more and nothing less. And he'll be pleased. He'll honor you. He'll honor your life if you'll honor him. Lord Jesus, thank you for the opportunity you give us to walk with you.

Help us to be obedient and follow you as you lead right now, Father, I pray. In Jesus' precious name, amen.