

## The Sword of the Spirit | Eph 6:17

If you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians 6. We've been talking about the armor of God and most of the pieces we've been looking at are defensive in nature. We have a shield, a helmet, and a breastplate. We need all these things because we're being attacked. We're at war. But we're given one weapon to take the fight to the enemy. We're not just to hunker down and build our trenches and get in a foxhole and stay still. We're called to get up and charge. We're called to go fight and wage war. We're called to go into the enemy's territory, through the gates of hell, and conquer and be victorious. But we need this weapon and, without it, we have nothing to fight with.

I know that in the age and time that we live in, this weapon has been put aside. No one wants to use it anymore. It's old-fashioned and out of date. It doesn't seem to work. It's useless and rusty. We've put it aside and picked up every other thing to fight. We've picked up smoke and mirrors. Fancy packaging. We've picked up all kinds of attractions to try to lure people to Christ. We think that if we can do this or do that well and entertain them, they'll like us and our God. We need to make a God that they like, and so we don't give them what they need. We don't understand the power that we hold in our hands: the Bible. The word of God. We don't understand the power within it.

First, it's the sword of the Spirit. So, let's look at the power of the Spirit. Second, we're going to look at the power of the word of God. Third, we're going to look at the power given to us if we use the sword of the Spirit.

Think about the power of God and the power of the Spirit Himself. You see, this is the power of the Spirit. It's the sword of the Spirit. This is what He uses. The Spirit has power to convict sinners. Mothers, you worry about your unconverted children. Fathers, you have family worship with them and you seek to teach them and witness to them, and sometimes you feel like your words are meaningless, powerless, and void of any effect. One time, I was talking to one of my children and it was when they were pretty young. I remember I felt like I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I felt like I was waxing eloquent. I was giving the Gospel as fervently as I knew how to give it and I thought this young mind was looking at me captivated with every word I had to say. I was like, "This is it. This is where God's going to convert my child." And when I was done, he goes, "My elbow itches." We were on two different pages.

That's how we feel sometimes when we go evangelize and witness. Sometimes, when we preach, we preach our heart out. It's like, "What happened? No one's listening. No one's being convicted. It doesn't seem like it's making any difference in anybody's lives." And we know inherently that we can't save souls. We can water. We can plant. But it's God Who gives the increase and we can't do it unless the Spirit blows. We cannot bring life out of death. We can share the words, but we can't convert. This is not just a good sales pitch. We don't have the ability to sell you, or pitch this well enough where you'll be persuaded through our crafty words to get you to be a Christian. You don't have the power to talk people into this.

But the Holy Spirit does. And only He does. You can get to the ears. I can get to the ears. I can get you to hear me but that's all. I can clap all I want. I can pound on this pulpit and you'll go, "He's really zealous today." That doesn't do anything, right? You know it doesn't do anything. Sometimes, I want the Holy Spirit so bad when I preach, I want to be so fervent, but I realize I can't drum it up. I can't just drum this thing up. And we feel impotent and useless. And it's true. We can't do it. But the Spirit can. In fact, this is the role of the Spirit. In John 16, Jesus says, *It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

Wouldn't you like Jesus to come to every church service? Wouldn't that be neat? But He can't because He's in His bodily form. He can't be everywhere, so He needs to go. And if He can go, He can send His Representative, the Holy Spirit, God Himself. The third person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit *can* come. *I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

The Holy Spirit convicts the world that they're wicked. The Holy Spirit brings true conviction of sin and of the coming judgment. You know that one sin will put you in hell forever. One sin will put you there forever. But how many sins do you have? You can't count them all. And the Spirit takes that and you know it's true because you have a conscience that condemns you. The Spirit takes that and convicts you and you know that you're guilty. He brings forth guilt and tells you of the impending judgment to come.

The Spirit not only has the power to convict you of your sins and tell you of the judgment to come, but He has the power to save you. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night because he was ashamed, he asked the Lord Jesus what he needed to do to be saved. Jesus talked to him and said he had to be born again. That didn't make sense to him. "How can I, being old... I can't be born again. Am I supposed to literally go back to my mother's womb and be birthed again? That sounds impossible and ridiculous." And Jesus, "You're supposed to be a teacher of the law and you don't know these things?" Your nature is evil. From top to bottom, you're an evil person. And under such conditions, you can't go to heaven.

You need to be re-birthed into a new man. A new person. How does that happen? Only by the work of the Holy Spirit. You have to be born again by the Spirit, He says. Then He says the Spirit blows wherever the Spirit desires to blow. We cannot tell the Spirit what to do. We're dependent upon the Spirit coming and if you're going to be converted today, you need the Holy Spirit. You're at the Holy Spirit's mercy. See, the Spirit is the power of salvation. If you're a Christian, it's because of the Holy Spirit. If you're not a Christian, it's because the Holy Spirit has not worked on your life. Woe to you if you don't feel guilt. Woe to you if you don't feel condemned. Woe to you if you think all is well with your soul and you don't know Christ. Woe to you if you're left alone. Woe to you if the Holy Spirit doesn't come to you and convict you.

But not only do we see that the Holy Spirit has the power to convict, save, and sanctify and all these things. We see that the word of God, the Bible, the truth of God's word, also has these powers. It says, *The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*. The Bible in your hand is very powerful. You may not understand that. You may not believe that. You may think it's just a book of fiction and just another book, but it's not another book. It's the only book written by God. It's the only word of God that we have. It's God's word and it has the authority and the power of God in it.

One, it has the power of self-verification. How do we know the Bible is the word of God? It's not because the preacher says it's the word of God. It's not because Mom and Dad says it's the word of God. It's not because some proof, evidence, or miracles outside the Bible point to the Bible saying it's the word of God. No, if something outside the Bible's what tells you that it's the word of God, then that outside the Bible becomes your authority. It's the authority of the Bible itself. It's the foundation of its own verification. You say, "Well, that doesn't make sense. It's circular reasoning." There are some things that are self-verifying in this world. Two things in particular.

Power itself demonstrates its own power. Light is another self-verifying element of the world. We need light to verify everything else. If we didn't have light, scientists couldn't verify any of their experiments. We have to have light. Flashlight, candlelight, sunlight. You have to have light. Without light, you don't see or observe. But what light do you use to verify light? Light verifies itself. You don't need another light to verify light. Light is self-verifying. The word of God is the light of God. It is self-verifying. Proverbs 36:9, *For with you the fountain of life; in your light do we see light*. Psalm 119, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*.

Without the word of God, we can know nothing. We have no foundation for science, logic, or ethics. Without the word of God, we would literally become postmodernists and relativists. We would have no authority for anything we believe. You see, power itself is self-verifying and the word of God is the power of God unto salvation. John Owen says, "Whatever it be that hath an innate power in itself is able to evidence itself on its own nature."

Do you remember when Saul was walking on the road to Damascus and a voice from heaven blinded him? Saul didn't go, "How do I know you're God?" He knew. "Who are you, Lord?" "I'm the One you're persecuting." "Well, prove it." You don't have to prove God's voice when you hear God's voice. When the Holy Spirit is using the word to convict you of your sins, you don't go, "How do I know that's God?" You know! Jesus says, "My sheep know my voice." The voice of God is self-verifying. I know my dad when he calls me. I know his voice. I know the voices of my kids. I know the voice of God when I hear it.

The word of God is the voice of God. You see, the Bible is indeed the word of God. This is why Paul said to the Thessalonians, *And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers*.

We know because you've turned from idol-worship, living a reckless, foolish, sinful life. You've turned and repented from that. You've been changed from the inside out. Now you're serving the living God. You believe the Bible is the word of God. It's changed your life. By these internal evidences contained in the word itself, your life verifies the word of God is indeed self-verifying. The power of the word is inherently authoritative. The Bible claims to be the word of God. All scriptures, the Bible says, are breathed out by God. You only have a voice because you have air in your lungs. Without breath, you have no voice. You have no words.

The Bible has come from the very breath of God. It has been breathed out from God. Peter says, *No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever procured by the will of man, but man spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* So, where does this word of God come from? It came from the very voice of the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. You see, this is His sword. These are His words. The scriptures demand belief in the same way God demands belief. The Bible acts as if it's God. It speaks authoritatively as if it's God because it *is* God's word.

It demands belief, obedience, and submission. There is no difference between the word of God and God Himself. To disobey the Bible is to disobey God. Again, the Puritan John Owen said, "The authority of God shining in [the Scriptures] affords us all the divine evidence of themselves which God is willing to grant unto us, or can be granted us, or is anywhere needful for us. So then the authority of the written word in itself and unto us is from itself as the word of God."

In other words, the Bible tells us it's the word of God and it's self-verifying as the word of God. It has all the evidence of the word of God. And by that, by the word itself, we know it is indeed the word of God. We need no external word. Extra word. You don't need a new prophecy. You don't need a new gut-feeling. You don't need some philosophical proof to know this: the Bible is its own evidence.

Thirdly, it's because the Bible does what it says it does. It has inherent efficacy. Scripture accomplishes the very thing it promises to accomplish. Isaiah 55 says, *For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

When Jesus said to Lazarus, "Get up," do you think Lazarus said, "I don't know about that"? When God said, "Let there be light," do you think the darkness says, "I don't think so"? When God says something, it happens. When God says "live", there's life. When God has spoken, everything He has purposed to accomplish in His word will be accomplished by His word. It will not return void. With this sermon, I have confidence – not because I come with my own words or I have some deep insight into some mystical thinking when I was sitting in the dark meditating on nothing. But because I have the word of God and proclaim the truth of God's word, I am certain that even this sermon, no matter how feeble it may be presented, will have an effect upon God's people.

You see, God created the universe by the spoken word and He recreates men and women by His written word. The scriptures are the power of God unto salvation. That's why Paul says in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel. I'm not ashamed of this message. I don't put it aside and have some technique or tactic to witness, evangelize, or try to win souls. I am not ashamed of the Gospel because that and that alone is the power of God unto salvation." By the word, dead souls are miraculously reborn, hardened sinners are sanctified, and those enslaved to spiritual darkness are gloriously liberated by the light.

This is why Jeremiah 29 tells us, *Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?* When God's word penetrates our heart, it changes our heart. And only by the word of God can a heart of stone be broken. You see, the word of God has the same power as the Spirit of God. That's what I want you to see. The Spirit of God is powerful, but how do you think the Spirit of God works? What is the method of the Spirit's power?

You've got to understand that, in the triune God, the Holy Spirit is the effective agent of the Three. The Father sends the Son and the Father's Son sends the Spirit. The Father plans, the Christ accomplishes, and Who does the application? The Spirit. It's the Spirit that brings forth new birth and regeneration. It's the Spirit that does this, but how does the Spirit do this? What is the method of the Holy Spirit working in your life? How is He changing your soul? How is he convicting you, encouraging you, rebuking you, correcting you, filling you with the love of God, and all the things the Spirit does in you? How does the Spirit work?

He works by the truth – the word of God. You understand that truth in itself is powerful. Just truth. Not even Biblical truth, but any truth is powerful. In the day and age we live in, we almost have to say this: two plus two equals four. Why is that so powerful? Because you can't argue with it. It doesn't care how you feel about it. It's objectively true. You can hate it and reject it. You may not like it. I mean, "Wait a minute, that doesn't care how I think mathematics should work." You know another powerful statement? There are only two genders. That's a powerful statement, isn't it?

There are only two genders: male and female. God made male and He made female. And that's a scientific fact. You say, "I don't like that." It doesn't matter what you like. It has nothing to do with your feelings. Truth is powerful because it's true. And you know it's true! You can argue but you know you're the fool. You can argue with it but you know your conscience condemns you. This is how powerful it is. We live in a day and age where people don't want truth. They want to cancel you for telling the truth. "That's hate speech." What I've said already is hate speech. Get me canceled.

But why do they hate it so much? Because the conscience is already condemning them. The Bible says, *On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.* Well, there's already one witness and that's their conscience. They know they're being unnatural in their thinking. They know they're going against truth in their lives and behavior. Though the whole world approves and applauds them... The whole world says,

“You’re right in the way you think you are. I’m going to give you your pronouns.” They may all do that. 100% of them besides one voice and it may just be your voice. You may be the lone voice in the whole wilderness. Everyone is applauding them and calling them whatever they want to be called, and you’re going, “Nope, you’re a dude.” That’s all it takes to condemn them. It’s all it takes to make them feel guilty, because their own conscience tells them that too.

You see, truth is powerful. Think about this: we’re not talking about two plus two being four. We’re talking about God’s truth. God’s word. How much more powerful is the word of God? We’re not talking about a TED Talk or the pagan wisdom of philosophers. Not funny stories of the preacher. Not just entertaining them with clever speeches. But “thus saith the Lord.” God says.

The Bible tells us, *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, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* Do you realize the Bible is the only book that reads you? It pierces your heart. You read the Bible and you find out the Bible is reading you. You find out the Bible knows what you’re thinking. The Bible knows how you feel. It knows your guilt. It’s able to get in there and discern your motives. You think, “Well, I have good motives. I’m a good person.” Then you start reading the Bible and it’s like, “Wait a minute. I don’t like this book. It’s telling me things I don’t want to hear. It’s telling me things about myself. It’s telling me that I’m guilty. It’s exposing my guilt. It’s exposing my true motives. And it lets me know that, though I seek to be good, I’m really doing all that I’m doing out of selfish attention, selfishness, self-glory, and the praise of me.”

You’re not living for the glory of God. You’re not waking up saying, “How do I please God today? How do I make Him big today? How do I make God proud of me today? How do I advance His cause and purpose? He’s got a plan and I want to fulfill that plan. He’s the master. He’s God. He’s Lord. How do I serve Him?” No, you’re waking up saying, “How do I serve myself? This world’s about me. My life’s about me.” And it tells you that you’re living for yourself and you’re a sinner.

The word of God has the power to convict you and expose your wickedness and filthiness. But it also has the power to save. It has the power to expose your condemnation and to give you the solution to your condemnation. This is why Paul says, “I’m not ashamed of this Gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation.

The third thing I want us to see here is that the word is the sword of the Spirit. We see the power of the Spirit and the power of the word can’t be separated. You can distinguish them but not disjoin them. The Spirit, indeed, is the word of God. The Spirit, indeed, inspired the word of God. All scriptures, we’ve said, have been breathed out by God. Our Puritan John Owen said, “Once the mind of God has been reduced to writing, each mortal and individual man to whom the scriptures may come, has God speaking to them no less directly than if he were hearing God speaking with His own voice to them.”

I don't know if you understand that. Some of you say, "I want to know God. I want to hear from God." Who here wants to hear from God? "I need a word from God. I need to know what God wants out of my life. I need to know." Well, God has spoken. He's revealed Himself and He's revealed what you're like too. It's only when you know God as God has revealed Himself that you really know yourself. You see, the Spirit has inspired the word of God and it's the Spirit Who illuminates the word of God. You know the difference between reading the Bible and it being dry as Charles Dickens. Yeah, Charles Dickens is dry. In fact, all fiction is pretty much dry to me.

You know what it's like to read the Bible and you're just going through the motions. I was wondering if, when we were singing today, we were just singing through the motions. I was wondering as a congregation if we were just singing. I don't know. Some of you were just singing out the motions. Because I was at first. I was like, "This is dry. These glorious lyrics are dry. They're dry." Truth that should penetrate our heart and cause us to leap, rejoice, and shout. You know what it's like to be dry. And you also know what it's like, you who know the Lord, for God to speak into your soul and give you a fresh word. I'm convinced that you Christians love to be convicted. You love to be convicted. You love to be rebuked.

The reason I'm convinced that we love that is because you know that God has spoken to you. You leave like, "God hasn't left me. God is still working in me. God is speaking to me. I treasure that even if it's a rebuke, it means something. I want to be rebuked. I don't want to keep living the way I've been living. I don't want to be dry, cold, and indifferent to the Lord. I had to leave the prayer meeting and went to the seminary, into my office, to pray. Because I led off in prayer and was like, "I led a dry prayer before the congregation." I'll just be honest. I led a dry prayer. I had to go and pray until I could pray. And maybe I'm too scared to pray like that in front of you. I don't know.

But we don't need dry intellectualism. We don't need just, "I read that. I know that." If our hearts are not moved and affected... I don't want emotions above the word. I don't want emotionalism and trumped up, beating the pulping, spitting, and jumping up and down for the sake of emotions. What good is that? It makes us feel good for the moment but it doesn't change our lives. But when you really hear God, it affects love for God. Affections for God. It changes us. The Spirit has to do that. But how does the Spirit speak to you and I? None of you have heard the Holy Spirit speak outside the Bible. None of you have.

The Spirit illuminates and speaks to us personally. It *is* personal. One of you might be hearing God's voice, the other may be in la-la land. Pray that you're not the one in la-la land right now. But when you are hearing God's voice, how is that happening? God speaks to us by, in, and through the scriptures. He's illuminating the very words that He inspired. And it's not like the Holy Spirit whispers into your ears "believe the Bible." As you read the Bible, it's speaking to you and it's the Spirit. Whatever the Bible is saying, that's what the Spirit is saying. And it's real. It's meaningful. It's convicting. It's life-changing.

It's what illumination does. It uses the word to sanctify you. You see, the Spirit works by, in, and through the word of God. The Spirit saves and sanctifies by the truth. 1 Peter 1 tells us, *Since*

*you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. The Bible sanctifies through the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2 says, But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.*

Where the word of God is, the Spirit of God is. Where the word of God is, the presence of God is. Where the word of God is, the power of God is. This is the word of God. This is the sword of the Spirit. I want you to see the power of the Spirit is the power of the word. It's His sword. This is what convicts you, changes you, speaks to you. Here's the remarkable thing. It tells us to pick it up. Take it up. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. It's giving us the command to use it.

You've got a lost coworker. I've got something you can use on them. "How do I do this?" The Gospel. How about that one? The truth of God's word. Why do churches replace doctrinal preaching with light shows? What can a light show do to you? Nothing but leave you astray, if anything. Why? Why do apologists replace the word of God with pagan philosophy? Why? Aristotle can't save you. Why do missionaries replace the word of God with cultural contextualisation techniques? Why? Are they ashamed of the Gospel? I mean, you have a sword. Pull that out. Get them with that. Go into the heart with that.

You see, we're to yield this. Hold it. Use it. Attack with it. Attack. The Spirit is the power of God. The agency of God's power. The Father plans, the Son accomplishes, the Spirit applies. And the Spirit applies through the word of God. The Father works by the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit's power is inherent within the word itself. And thus, we can take the very sword of the Spirit, the power of God, and use it as our weapon. Think about this: you have the most powerful weapon in the world in your hands. The most deadly weapon. The most advanced weapon in the world.

2 Corinthians 5:18 says, *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.* Here's what God has done through Jesus Christ: He's brought reconciliation to those who hate Him. He's brought a Gospel of peace. If you're here and you hate God, you're running from Him, you're living for yourself, and you're living in sin, then you're an enemy of God. And your whole life, you've been defiling the living God by your actions and behavior. God's given you life, breath, and everything you have. You're in debt. You've been living off of the mercy, benefits, and gifts of the living God. And you're not even thankful.

One of the worst types of people are those who purposefully take advantage of others and live off them. Worse than that are those who don't even say "thank you," and you've done it your whole life. In fact, you've complained. You're like the Israelites who came out of Egypt and just complained the whole time. God just saved you from slavery and all you can do is complain because you don't have watermelons and you don't have what you think you need. But Christ came and solved the problem. You're under the wrath of God. You're a sinner. You have no

hope. What can you do to save yourself? Are you going to start living a good life from this day forward? But what are you going to do with your sins? You can't live as a good person from this day forward. Try.

The Bible says that even what you do that you think is good isn't good enough. Do one good deed that is without a mixture of selfishness tainting that good deed. You're a filthy sinner! Even if you want to be a good person, you can't do it. You're hopelessly lost. And your conscience condemns you. Just look at your record and pretend like your record and life is going to be on CNN and everyone is going to see it on the great day. That's going to happen. What are you going to do to expunge yourself of your record? You can't do it but Christ has done it for you. He's given us the message of reconciliation.

Listen to this: that very message of salvation in Jesus Christ has been given to us. It says in verse 19, *entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. We are to take the sword of the Spirit, use it, and apply it to those who are still in opposition to God.*

Kids, some of you have lost friends and you don't want to evangelize because you're afraid of what they may think of you. But do you understand that you have the message of salvation that they need? It's the power of God that can save their souls from hell and judgment to come. Do you not want to pull out your sword and use it? We're God's ambassadors. It says God is making His appeal through us. We're to beseech others on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. What is the basic message? It goes on to say in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

This is the great message. You just need to know this message. If you don't understand Genesis, Exodus, or every other doctrine in scripture that we should study and learn... There's a reason for every doctrine revealed. We need to be equipped with every truth and live by every word that precedes from the mouth of God. But one doctrine we need to be rooted and grounded in above everything else is this great message of reconciliation. That God took sinners' debt, their sins. And if you're here and don't know the Gospel, let me make it as clear as I know how. You have a mountain of debt. Every sin is added to your debt. And you have no way to pay for it unless you pay for it in hell for all eternity.

Every lie and every selfish, boastful look you've ever had. Every prideful moment. Every time you've robbed God of His glory and took it for yourself. Every dirty look. Every foul thing you've said about your mom or your father. Or how you treated your brother or sister. The things that you said behind people's backs. All the gossip. All these things condemn us all to death. That debt gets taken off of you and placed upon an innocent Man who did nothing wrong. For God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. He transfers your debt to Christ who does not deserve to die. And because Christ's great love for you, and because God loved you so much that He sent His Son to die in your place and take the curse of death for you and the curse of

the law for you; to be judged on your behalf. He took that, bore your penalty, so that you who's guilty, may be declared innocent.

Christ lived His whole life without one sin or evil thought. All the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus gets transferred over to your account. You may be as guilty as sin and know you're under the wrath of God. You know you can't do anything to deliver yourself. You're going to go to hell. You're hopeless but here's this good word. In Jesus Christ, through faith in Him, you may be set free. How would you like to know that you're not going to face charges? Wouldn't that be glorious that you're not going to have to own-up to them and pay the penalty for them? What must you do to be saved?

You've got to want to be saved. You've got to turn from your sins. You've got to hate your sins. "Lord, please deliver me from myself." You've got to realize that you can't do anything to earn or deserve it. You've got to completely depend, trust, and rely upon the grace of God that Jesus is enough to save you. Do you believe that?

Don't be ashamed of that message. It's the message of salvation. It's the power of God unto salvation. It's our only weapon. The Bible says, *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.* We don't wage war like other people do. We're not a political institution. The church is a despised institution by the world. It's a narrow way. There are few who actually find the path that leads to eternal life. We're always going to be sheep sent out to wolves. The world and nations, plural, will always hate the church of the living God. The Bible tells us this. But we're not called to boycott, cancel, or imprison those who disagree with us or do pickets, marches, or rallies. The Bible says, *For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power – that's what I want. I want something that actually works. Divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience.*

You see, the Bible alone, the word of God, and truth contained within it, is the only thing that's going to do any good in this world. Real lasting good. And we have it. You have it. It's been given to you. You've been given a belt, a helmet, a breastplate, and a shield. You've been given all these wonderful things, but you have a weapon. Let's use it. We don't need gimmicks, smoke, and games. We just need to preach with all clarity, authority, and power. Behold in our hands the most powerful weapon in the world: the sword of the Spirit.

Let's pray.

Lord, forgive us for how we don't use the weapon you've given us. We lay it to the side and forget to yield it and pull it out of its sheath. Help us, dear Lord, to first use it in our own lives and apply it to ourselves. That we might be convicted. That we might be changed. Help us to not just be more concerned about everybody else being convicted if we ourselves are not convicted. Lord, change us. Work in us. Lord, there are only 52 weeks in a year. There are only 42 Sundays in a year. We don't want one of them to be wasted. Life's too short to have a mundane,

normal, powerless... Lord, would it be on Saturday of next week going, "Wasn't last Sunday the most wonderful day of the year. Last Sunday was so glorious that You met with us, spoke with us, and changed us. You did a work among us through Your word?" I pray, dear God, that You would not leave us to ourselves. Do not forsake us, dear God, and when we pray, let it not be just another prayer meeting. When we sing, let it not just be routine lyrics where our minds are far from You. When we listen to the preaching, help us, Lord, to be the best that we can in the most humblest way we can to listen intently to Your voice. To say, "Dear God, speak O Lord, Your servants are listening." That we'd come to actually hear the voice of God. To know that we've heard You and You've spoken to us would be the greatest of all privileges of this world. I pray You'd use us, dear God. Save souls. Lord, in those who may be under some conviction now, let not the devil come and pluck up the seeds from their hearts. Let them not go and just get worried about what they're going to eat, drowned by such fooling and temporary distractions. Lord, we want to see You save souls. It's our hearts' desire that You work among us. This we pray in Your Son's name, Amen.