***The Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit

RV20-02***

Once more, please open your Bibles to Ephesians 6 as we are studying the letter to Thyatira. This is the tenth in that series. The letter to Thyatira is in Revelation 2:18-29. We are studying the various words that describe what the Lord Jesus Christ found commendable in this body of believers. We are on the word "service," which relates to the Christian's program of serving the Lord in various ways with his spiritual gifts.

We have found and pointed out to you that the Bible compares a Christian in his service to a military campaign. A Christian receives training for this campaign in the local church to prepare him for combat duty in the angelic warfare in which he is daily engaged. The pastor-teacher gives instruction in the techniques of the Christian life, but the soldier is personally responsible for applying them.

The soldier also has made available to him by God the Holy Spirit certain essential items of combat gear. We found that these include the belt of truth, which is divine viewpoint doctrine in the human spirit stored there. He has been provided a breastplate of righteousness which refers to godly living. He has been provided with the shoes of the gospel of peace, which refers to combat mobility and motivation to engage in combat. This is the result of divine reconciliation. He has also been provided with the shield of faith – the belief in God and in His Word, the Bible, as being a trustworthy record of God's thinking.

Any failure on the part of the pastor-teacher to train, or on the part of the believer soldier to learn, will result in spiritual injury and defeat in the angelic warfare. This is an overview in brief detail of what we have gone over previously in much greater detail, but it is one of the most fruitful reviews that most of you have had in a long time. You have recognized it, and you have expressed it. If you have missed some of these, we hope you can make them up, but I feel that this is a very important orientation to what the Christian life is all about. That is Satan's great power and the great source of his capacities – to confuse us on just what in the world the Christian life is all about. Well, it is a fight, and it's a fight for spiritual capacity, and a fight to maintain that spiritual capacity in the angelic conflict.

Unfortunately, Christians are not made aware of this. So there is lethargy. There is moving along in a euphoric condition, quite unaware of the fact that we are on a battlefield, and that there are Christians who are being injured, and Christians who are being wounded, and Christians who are being knocked out of action just because they got sloppy about their training program, and sloppy about the use of these items of protective gear.

**The Helmet of Salvation**

We now come to verse 17 which gives us another item of the Christians combat gear. Verse 17 says, "And take the helmet of salvation." This refers to a very important item of a soldier's combat equipment, which is the headgear. The head quite obviously is a vital part of the body. It cradles the brain, which is the control center of the whole body. A blow to the head can completely disable a soldier, and it can very readily destroy him on the field of combat. The head is a very sensitive, vital area that needs protection. A Christian soldier, for that reason, has a divinely provided helmet to protect his mentality. That's the idea behind the helmet image (the helmet analogy). It is the mind of the believer which needs to be protected. So God has provided us with something to go into battle with which will protect the mind.

Again, I must remind you that the Christian soldier is commanded to put on this helmet for his protection in the angelic warfare. All of these items of combat gear are provided for those who are already in the royal family of God. These things must therefore be interpreted in terms of the fact that you are already a Christian. You will make a great mistake if you try to interpret these items in terms of the fact that this is something that will contribute to your becoming a Christian. Paul is talking to those who are already in the Lord's army. He is talking about how to enter the battle and how to survive in it.

The helmet is salvation now. Again, since this is spoken to those who are already believers, this cannot mean that you and I are to seek salvation, because we already have that. As a Christian soldier, what this refers to is that we are to enter into the significance of the fact that we possess salvation which was delivered to us on the grace basis. It is important to realize that we have that kind of salvation, because that has monumental implications that are necessary for our survival in the angelic conflict. Salvation by grace indicates to us that we have had Satan's control over us as human beings completely broken. The devil's back has been broken. His capacity to control has been thoroughly neutralized. It has been thoroughly terminated. Any influence that Satan and his demons have over us as believers is because we are willingly exposing ourselves to that influence.

I don't know why that's such a hard concept to grasp, but we had some reaction last Sunday night to the concept that Christians can be influenced by demons and by Satan. If you don't think that's possible, then you better wake up in a hurry, because that is fully possible, and that is exactly what happens. It is the helmet of salvation that protects your mind against this very attack. Obviously, the Lord Jesus Christ had to face this very thing – Satan attacking Him, and Satan seeking to dissuade Him from the role that He had been called to in God's plan. He could have said, "Yes." It is perfectly possible for the demons to influence you. It is perfectly possible for Satan to influence your thinking.

The salvation, which is this helmet, is given by God to believers, and it provides protection for the mind against Satan's human viewpoint thinking. Human viewpoint thinking leads to spiritual defeat in the angelic warfare, and it leads to uncertainty about God's will for you in that combat. The mind of the Christian soldier must be able to function free from any uncertainty concerning his internal security. He must have no uncertainty in his mind that there is anything Satan can do to him when he meets him on the field of battle relative to his eternal destiny.

That is what the helmet of salvation provides. It provides confidence. It provides security. It provides assurance for us that we are involved in a salvation that has been provided on such a basis that it cannot be taken away from us by Satan, no matter what he can do. That gives great confidence. That is a great morale builder in the field of battle. These groups of believers who are taught that you can lose your salvation from one day to the next are actually believers who are moving through life with great uncertainty. They have low morale because they don't know at any point when they may again lose their salvation. They are being told that they must live in such a way that ultimately they may expect eternal life.

Well, how do I know that I'm living in such a way as to secure eternal life? At what moment have I stepped out of that eternal life? And that is a fearful condition to have, and to think of trying to do battle with Satan and the demon angels. What you want to do under that condition is to stay away from them. The devil is the kind of an enemy you don't even want to get near. You don't want to get near the demonic hosts. You want to avoid them at all costs.

So the helmet of salvation gives us the realization that we have a security that Satan can in no way undermine. It protects the believer, therefore, from being intimidated by Satan over his sins. That's the way the devil gets at you. You are not going to live a life that's perfectly free from sin. When evil crops up, if you do not understand that you have a salvation that has been provided for you, apart from human doing – a grace provided salvation, and you do not understand, consequently, that you are secure in that salvation, and the devil cannot cast you back on the road to hell, then the minute you sin, the devil is right there. Revelation 12:10 tells us he's right there to accuse you, and he's right there to intimidate you. Right away you're out of the operation because you're thinking becomes all fouled up.

This helmet of grace salvation protects your thinking from that kind of disorientation. Everyone's future sins have been paid for. So, because those future sins have been paid for, fellowship is preserved by confession alone. And fellowship in time is preserved on the basis of what Christ has already done. Therefore, when you understand that it's that kind of a salvation that has already covered your future sins, again, that's the kind of a helmet that will protect your thinking from being subject to Satan's intimidation.

This helmet protects your mind from Satan's attacks on the authority of Scripture. It is salvation which has provided a teaching as the result of the enlightenment of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, you have a salvation that is the result of truth. Nobody comes to eternal life because some preacher is a good orator; because some preacher knows how to put words together; or, because some preacher knows how to tell effective stories. All you and I, as ministers of the Word, can do is give the information. It is God the Holy Spirit, who comes along and suddenly just hits you with the realization that that's the truth.

I must confess that I have seen that actually happen in the church service on more than one occasion, where there have been people who have been unbelievers. They were not Christians, and they came into our church service. In each case, it was somebody who had attended over a period of weeks. Suddenly something was said when the gospel was being discussed, and the information got through. And I've seen the enlightenment of God the Holy Spirit. It's almost like somebody put an electric shock through them, and the thing hit home. If they wanted to speak out, they would have said, "I see it. I know what you mean. Now I understand it, and I believe it."

I remember Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who founded Dallas Seminary, in his class on True Evangelism that he would conduct with all the new students, told us how on occasion he actually had that happen in his evangelistic meetings. He was a man who believed that salvation was the accomplishment of God the Holy Spirit. That's how he presented the gospel. He understood that the helmet of salvation was a salvation provided by grace. On occasion, he would tell us that during his evangelistic meetings, he would be laying the gospel out, and he'd suddenly have people who would stand up in his meeting and say, "Now I see it. I believe it." He said, "That's very disruptive, in a way, to suddenly be in the midst of your fervent discussion about how to be saved, and somebody stands up ..., and they've gotten saved before you even finished the sermon."

That's the kind of salvation this is – a non-human doing salvation. That helmet of salvation protects you from any disillusionment of your human endeavors.

I heard of a missionary one time who was sitting around the fire talking to a native, trying to lead him to the Lord, and explaining to him all about what Christ had done. Another native came along, sat down by the fire, and started listening to the conversation. The missionary wasn't even talking to him. Suddenly the man who had sat down by the campfire and was listening to the conversation got up, walked into his hut, and came out with his hands full of his god's – sticks and various images, and he threw them on the fire, and he said, "I believe it." The missionary looked up dumbfounded. He wasn't even talking to him. The missionary said, "The first thing that came to my mind was, 'What did I say? I remember that. That is the way to do it. I'll list this out in four spiritual laws: one; two; three; four. If I can say it this way, I'm going to get a ... conversion.'" He was desperately trying to remember what it was he said that had brought this person in.

He had just presented the gospel. It was what God the Holy Spirit had said that made the difference, and that brought the conviction that enabled this person to say, "I believe it," and to take all of his gods and throw them into the fire. The helmet of salvation that we have is the result of the enlightenment of God the Holy Spirit. Don't ever forget that. It will keep you, therefore, from being a gimmicky witness who is trying to give people something to do in order to be saved. You'll be protected from that. That's one of the purposes of this helmet.

This helmet also preserves the Christian soldier from forgetting that the object of his faith is Jesus Christ, not his human works. This helmet will protect you from the mistake of getting your eyes off the Lord as the object of your faith in salvation. Many people think about something they have done; the kind of lives they are living; or, some good deed. That is what their eyes are on. That is what their faith is in. The helmet of salvation will preserve you from that kind of mistaken thinking.

This helmet also enables a believer to give Jesus Christ the preeminence in all things, rather than giving the preeminence to yourself. This again is a variation of some glorification of yourself: "I'm a good man. I'm a good woman. I'm tender hearted. I do nice things for people." This is the illusion that somehow your kindness and your good character is what is important with God. That is not important to God. That does not make it with God. It is what His Son is that is important to God.

So this helmet will enable you to put the preeminence where it belongs in salvation when you talk to people on the person of Christ.

This helmet also prevents the Christian soldier from fearing death. That is very important on the battlefield. You must enter combat with the realization that you may potentially be wounded, and that you may potentially indeed even die. But if you are fearful to the point of paralysis over that potential wounding and death, then you immediately become a soldier who is ineffective in battle. That's called morale. That's called battle morale. One of the most important items for victory is that the soldiers who are engaged have high morale capable of facing death with determination to do the job.

So the helmet of salvation is what enables you and me to realize that our conflict in the angelic warfare can be met without fear, because we have provided for us dying grace. And if dying is part of God's plan, He will give us the grace to do that. It will be just as easy to die as it is to live under grace. The helmet of salvation takes away the fear of death. Perhaps you do not fear death. But don't forget that the average person you meet who is not a Christian, or who is not an informed Christian, fears death very much. It eats away down deep inside of him all the time.

Adding anything to faith for personal salvation will prevent you from possessing the assurance that the helmet of salvation gives you. If you try to hide anything at all to salvation, you do not have the helmet of salvation in place. You might even be a Christian. You might even become saved by faith. However, someplace along the line, you pick up the idea that you have to behave yourself to keep saved, or that you have to do something. Later on, somebody came along and, said, "Hey, you've never been baptized in water? You're not saved." So you added a work, but fortunately you added that after your real salvation experience took place. But that act of trying to add some work will keep you from having the helmet of salvation in place.

Do not attempt to gain confidence over Satan by substituting something else for the helmet of salvation. Only that will give you confidence. Your Bible study won't do it. Your good works won't do it. Your prayer life won't do it. Your offerings to God's work won't do it. None of that will gain the helmet of salvation for you. It has to be a recognition of the grace by faith nature of our salvation.

Finally, this helmet protects the Christian soldiers mind from Satan's taunts about our own spiritual failures. We know our position in Christ. We know it's secure. It's there because it's a grace provision. The helmet of salvation gives you that confidence. When you fail spiritually (and indeed we will), Satan will be there to taunt you. Well, you're not going to hear the devil's voice in your ear. You're going to hear the voices of the devil's agents.

A man in the last session was disturbed when he heard me say that Christians can be the devil's agents, but it is often other believers who will come along and taunt you for your failure in your Christian life. It will often be other believers who go rooting their noses into your breakdown; into your wounding; and, into your incapacity on the field of battle because of some successful attack of Satan against you. When you have the helmet of salvation in place, your mind will not be affected by those taunts. You will know how to proceed to apply first aid to yourself. Remember: that's what the technique of confession of sin is. It's the immediate application of first aid to your spiritual wounding. Anytime you and I fall into sin, we have been spiritually wounded, and you can let that wound become infected, and let it become gangrenous, and let it become very serious. Or you can immediately give it the first aid of confession, and neutralize the effects.

**The Sword of the Spirit**

The last part of verse 17 adds another item to the Christian soldier's equipment, and that is called the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The Christian soldier has a weapon in his battle. The Greek here commands the soldier of the Lord to secure this weapon for attack as well as defense.

The sword that was common in Paul's time among the Roman soldiers (after whom he is patterning all this) was the makharia sword. It was a two-edged sword. It was about 18 inches long in the length of the blade, and it had a handle with a protective cross piece so that it was a short, stubby sword. It was not as other swords. The Thracian sword, for example, was a two-handed job that you really swung over your head, and you manipulated by slashing at the enemy. This makharia sword revolutionized combat in the ancient world. This is the sword that made the Roman army a fearful instrument of warfare. It enabled a soldier to come into the kind of combat that was conducted in those days, which was always close-order combat. It enabled a soldier to come close to an enemy with his shield in his hand, and be able to attack the enemy with the sword by thrusts. That was the genius of this. It seems awfully simple, but no one had thought about it for a long time. They kept making these long swords that you swung around. Finally, somebody in the Roman army said, "Wait a minute. That's always exposing us. As soon as we take a swipe, what kind of a position is that to be in? All the vital areas of the body and all the pinball area is now open for a counter thrust. What we want to do is to fight in such a way that that shield is always there. It's always in front of the pinball area so they can't get at us." All you had to do was hit in two inches with this sword into a vital area, and it was almost always fatal.

So they came up with the short makharia sword, and this sword was manipulated by short thrusts from behind the shield. When the enemy came at them, all they had to do was duck that first swipe of the long sword, and then the body was exposed. Then they could come in and thrust, and that took care of that. They took the next in line, and they went right down. Furthermore, when they wanted to make a forward movement together, they would build what was called a phalanx, which was one shield overlapping another shield. The formation was in the form of a V, like you see birds flying. The probably got it from looking at birds flying. One shield was overlapping another shield, so here was this formidable wall coming at you and just carving right through the enemy troops with these short-bladed swords from under those shields, ... puncturing the enemy as they came upon them. It was a frightening technique.

The apostle Paul looks at that sword and he says, "That's the way to fight spiritual combat. That is exactly the way to fight in the Lord's army. That is the exact way to do spiritual combat – the use of a sword with short direct thrusts from behind the protection of the shield. Well, we've seen that we have a shield of faith from which we operate. Here is a sword for short, penetrating, fatal thrusts. What is that sword? He tells us what it is. It's the Word of God. The Greek says, "The sword *from* the Spirit" – not the sword *of* the Spirit. That means, of course, God the Holy Spirit. The reason he describes it as such is because God the Holy Spirit produced the sword, which is what you're holding in your hand – the Bible. This sword is God's revelation of His divine viewpoint to man.

But there is another important item that you should notice: the Greek word here for "word:" "Which is the Word of God." There are different words in Greek for the word "word." This symbol for "word" is a symbol that means "saying." It means a proposition. The Greek word is "rhema." There is another word "logos" which means an actual word. However, this is "rhema" – not specific symbols of (individual) words, but sayings. So what we have here is that the sword of the Spirit are propositions of truth that God has declared. We generally summarize that under the words "Bible doctrine." It means "what is uttered in speech," referring to the divine viewpoint truth recorded in the Bible.

So the sword of the spirit is Bible doctrine principles – categories of truth. The Holy Spirit brings these sayings of God up from the storage which we have in the human spirit. He brings up these sayings for appropriate use in battle at the appropriate time. Again, without the sword of the Spirit (that is the sayings – doctrinal viewpoint principles), you've got zero for entering combat. You cannot survive in the angelic conflict, let alone to enjoy victory, without having stored God's sayings in your human spirit. So here is a critical area of the Christian soldier's equipment which is not something you just walk in and pick up overnight. If a Christian soldier does not know categories of Bible doctrine, he has no sword for the battle. The sword is provided to the Christian soldier via, of course, the inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit.

**Inspiration**

The word inspiration in the Greek means God-breathed. That is, what we have in these sayings in the Bible are not the ideas of fallible man, but they are the provision to man of the thinking of an infallible God. God the Holy Spirit provided the thinking. He breathed it into the human authors. And as God the Holy Spirit breathed this divine viewpoint truth into these selected men, He then carried these men along so that they made an inerrant record. They wrote it down, indeed, in the vocabulary that they were used to using, but in such a way that they did not record any error. They recorded the concept of doctrine that God the Holy Spirit had breathed into them in exactly the right way to transfer it on to us.

**Verbal Plenary Inspiration**

We call this verbal plenary inspiration, which means every word of the Bible is inspired. Plenary means that all parts of the Bible are inspired – breathed in by God.

So the Bible provides us the means for destroying all of the objections of human viewpoint thinking against God that we confront in the angelic conflict. The Bible provides us with the sayings of God (the thinking of God) to refute and to destroy all human viewpoint opposition.

I had a wedding yesterday. I always have a lot of fun at weddings. I had a very small part. All I had to do was one thing. Usually at a wedding, I like to spell out to the bride and the groom some basic points that they can hang on to, to make real for them, or to crystallize for them, exactly what they're holding their hand (which is what they're doing in effect) on the Bible and taking an oath to before Almighty God – that they will be true to this oath before God as long as they live.

So I usually like to let them know what is involved in the oath that they're taking. The Bible has about seven basic principles of responsibilities that the husband is swearing to. For the wife, there are also about seven basic principles that she is taking an oath to be faithful to.

Well, one of the bridesmaids came up to me this morning and said, "Boy, you really stirred up a lot of flak there yesterday." I said, "How is that?" She said, "A group of those people wanted to know where you got all those ideas about women being in subjection; asking their husbands what they want to know, if they want to learn; not talking in church; and, being homemakers." I said, "Well, those were just Scriptures I was reading." She said, "I know. I said that to them. I said, 'He's just reading out of the Bible.'"

You know, that kind of stops people short. I said, "The Bible says; the Scripture says; and, the Word of God says." I was trying to say, "Now I'm going to read something out of the Bible. I try to pass this on. I'm just telling you what God has said, and I don't want any flak about it." But isn't it interesting that they didn't catch that? One of our men suggested that I should add the references at the end of those verses, and maybe I'll have to do that in the future to try to get across: "I have now spoken from 1 Corinthians, such and such. And I have now spoken from here and here in Ephesians" to try to get it across. But the flak was simply that God had said something that was offensive to the mentality of that particular group of religious people. I'm not sure whether they're Christians or not. They're religious people, certainly. But to these women, this was offensive.

When the young bridesmaid said, "Well, he was just reading from the Bible," that sort of took them up short, and then the response was, "Well, we never read that." That seemed to be about the only answer you could say. If you hadn't ever read that in the Bible, and it is the Bible, I don't think I'd say it.

We have a president who keeps telling us things I wish he would keep to himself about what he didn't know that he should have known. If you don't know something that's in the Bible, that is as important as that, I'd sort of just say, "Oh, yeah, well," and then go home and start running through and see that this stuff is in there before I make a dumb statement like, "I never read that in the Bible," as if that's going to wipe it out.

Well, what are we dealing with here? Doctrine provides a sword for dealing with this problem by destroying all the objections of human viewpoint. There is such a slew and monument of human viewpoint relative to marriage and the relationship between men and women. Very often, however, I must confess, people come up and say, "Wow, that's really making it clear. They really knew what they were taking an oath to, didn't they?" They find it a commendable thing to do. But if you are moving in a circle of the ERA or the feminist type of mentality, I can guarantee that you'll hate that wedding ceremony. And I have different kinds. I have the $4.50 ceremony, and I have the $9.95 one, and you won't like either one of them because, it's really just the same concept. I just keep saying, "The Bible says" more in one than I do in the other.

But here's an article that was published in one of the newspapers of the local colleges in the area. It's entitled "Multi-Marriage Favored by Author." It's written by the editor of this publication. Let me read it to you. It will sort of illustrate what we mean again here. What this article says can only be struck down in one way. That's if you have got the sword of the Spirit, and you know the categories of the doctrine of truth relative to marriage and the relationship between men and women and God's morality. If you don't know it, this sophisticated article has shot you down. You're not going to be able to fight on the field of battle for one moment.

It says, "Women's changing role has been one of the greatest reasons for the erosion of the nuclear (or monogamous) marriage. That's the opinion of author Robert Rimmer, who wrote about alternative marriage styles in The Harrad Experiment and Proposition 31. He spoke to 50 students and faculty here Tuesday. Rimmer expects the eventual breakup of the one-and-one once-and-for-all marriage. 'Statistics show that 50% of all married couples eventually divorce, and the average length of a marriage is seven years,' Rimmer said."

That must be where they got that song, Mr. Holt: Seven Years with the Wrong Woman. Well, maybe not. I don't know. But it seems like it.

So he continues: "Rimmer advocates legislation that would allow experimentation with marriage: 'Most people can handle a second commitment in life, but it's not for everyone. All we have today is monogamy, but we should have bigamist marriages,' he said. 'A nuclear family has no place to go but boredom. I'm not talking about the swinging type of sexuality, but a commitment.'"

Now notice these code words to add dignity to immorality.

"Some people have said Rimmer's ideas are really just expanded monogamy. In Rimmer's multi-family concept, each person has a commitment to the whole. The woman's movement was both a revolution and civil war. The new female's idea of co-equality sharing is an illusion. 'Men are too hard,' he said. 'Monogamy worked in the past because husbands were the boss. Most women will not play the role of boy ... slave anymore. Societal changes are making women more like men,' Rimmer said.

"A female's life expectancy has been years higher than the male's for decades, but the increase of women in the workforce is leveling that statistic off. Rimmer claimed wives are working harder than their mates, considering their outside jobs and housework. 'This is causing problems with the family. Most liberated women no longer want to play the sex object,' he said. 'Few are willing to play the lover, mother, and protector role that men want.'

"Rimmer believes that young people need to be taught how to cope with marriage as it exists today. In The Harrad Experiment, he proposed a college where students would have a roommate of the opposite sex for six months. During this period, they would live and work together as a team... At the end of the six-month period, they would get a new roommate, and this would continue for two years. No university or private corporation has attempted to set up a Harrad-type dormitory. Rimmer said the best chances of this happening would be with young faculty members who are trained in psychology or sociology. 'Many universities don't care where you live,' he said. 'It wouldn't need to be sponsored by the university, but you'd need to keep a low profile.'"

This is published and promoted by this speaker, who is on the university campus in our Metroplex area, to college students who are now confronted with this kind of so-called "alternative lifestyle." How are you as a Christian soldier going to meet it? There is only one way. If you do not have the sword of the Spirit, wherein you possess the category of biblical marriage, you cannot meet this. This is arguing from psychology and sociology – how things are. The whole issue is that man has become a garbage dump of morality degeneracy, and now we have to adapt to that condition. But God says, "No. I want to take you off the garbage dump, and I want to elevate you to where once more you reflect the image and the likeness of a God in whose character you were made." But only the sword of the Spirit with this category of doctrine relative to marriage will enable you to see that, and will enable you to see what a horrendous thing is taking place in our society, and what a destructive thing this is. You can see how degenerative the animal-like qualities are to which young people are being reduced, because there's nobody to explain to them what marriage is all about.

I don't care how fine a car you buy, or how much you pay for it. If you do not read the manual that's designed to tell you how to operate that car, and you decide that oil has just become so expensive that you're going to put water in the crankcase instead, you're not going to get away with it. You're going to tear the thing up. You're going to destroy the machine. It's not going to work.

The only manual we have on marriage is the Bible itself – the sayings of God. And if you do not act according to these sayings, you will tear up the marriage. I don't care who you are, or what you are. You cannot survive without it. God's divine viewpoint is the only basis upon which these relationships will work. That is the institution of marriage. The thing that offended some people at the wedding was that I prefaced my remarks with the statement that these are the regulations that God has laid out for the divine institution of marriage, and they are not optional. People don't mind if God has laid out some regulations for marriage, but they sure don't like you to say that they are not optional – that you have no choice but to obey them or to be destroyed by them. But that's exactly the way it is. The only way you can combat this kind of thinking is with the sword of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the Bible is thus the final authority in all matters on which it gives instruction, and no one can refute what the Scriptures say. It is a devastating weapon. You may not like it. You may resist it. You may reject it. But you'll be destroyed by it. The Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity, you remember, had to Himself use the Word of God as the sword with which he had to attack the devil. In His humanity, which is the only way he functioned, in that temptation wilderness, He met the devil in just the way you and I have to meet him – in the capacities of our humanity. And the way He met Satan was with the sword of the Spirit in His hand.

You remember that the first appeal He rejected was the appeal to live by dependence on Himself instead of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. The devil said, "Live in dependence on yourself, Jesus. You've got the power. Make the bread that You need out of these stones so You can feed yourself. Jesus Christ ran back a Scripture from the book of Deuteronomy: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God," and Satan was devastated.

Satan then took that up and decided, "Well, I'll use the Bible if that's how He wants to talk." Jesus Christ was attacked a second time, and He rejected Satan's attempt on this occasion, which was to use the Bible to place unauthorized demands on God. So Satan said, "Get up here on the top of this temple and throw Yourself down, because Bible doctrine says that the angels will catch You, and not permit You to dash your feet on the stones below." But God had not authorized Jesus Christ to tempt God (to test God) in such a way.

Those of you who love to put out the Golden Fleece to find out what God wants you to do are getting on top of the temple and you're jumping off. You may just discover there aren't any angels down there to grab you when you land. So I would be very careful. That is not a Christian order of finding out the will of God – to put out the fleece. That was OK for Gideon and his boys, but that is not OK for you and me today.

Jesus Christ rejected Satan's second attempt by simply using again the sword of the Spirit against the devil. In the third attempt, again, He rejected Satan's proposed career for Him, and the means for its realization. Satan proposed that He become the ruler of the world, and that the kingdoms of the world would now come into His possession, which is exactly the plan that God had for Him. The devil got very subtle. He said, "I'll just talk you into exactly the career I know You've come to this earth for." But Satan said, "I'll give it to you if you worship me." And the Lord Jesus Christ swung around at him again with a quotation from Scripture: "You shall worship the Lord God and Him alone, loving Him with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And He devastated Satan so that Satan departed.

Again I emphasize to you that this was Jesus the man – not Jesus the super man. Jesus was just like you men and women who are here now, who could take the sword of the Spirit because He knew categories of truth and He could cut the devil down when the temptation and the attack came. If you've got the sword, you'll do exactly the same thing.

Hebrews 4:12, in closing, tells us something very important about this sword that we should keep in mind. This sword is effective and it is important because it has certain characteristics. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is living. That is, it is alive. The Bible possesses an inherent life because it is the very words of God Himself. What God has spoken has force and power behind it. When God created the universe, all he had to do was use His words. All He had to do was speak, and the universe came into being. When you have the very words of God, you have the mind of God, and you have something that is very powerful. So when you read your Scriptures, and you read the concepts of Scriptures that are recorded in those words, you are reading words that are alive.

Secondly, we're told that the Bible is powerful; that is, that the Bible has operating power for achieving spiritual effects. The Bible can do the job. The Bible can save the marriage. The Bible can preserve you from immorality. The Bible can save a nation from pursuing a destructive course in its undermining of the divine institutions. Whatever we need, the Bible has the force to bring about the change if people will listen to it.

A third factor is that the Bible is sharp – sharper than any two-edged sword (the two-edged sword of the Roman soldier). This indicates the Bible is capable of cutting down any human viewpoint deception. Whatever evil thinking comes your way, you can cut it to shreds with the Bible. That bridesmaid did exactly that yesterday when those women came to her indignantly thinking they had a point, that here was some poor backwoods preacher that's giving some unenlightened benighted concepts concerning marriage. And this girl turns around and says, "The Bible said that. Those were the words of God he was reading." She may not realize it, but she cut them to shreds because the Bible is a sharp instrument, and she cut down their human viewpoint so that they're probably home tonight licking their wounds, trying to think of an answer for her yet.

There's a fourth quality. It is capable of piercing to the extent of dividing the qualities of the soul and the spirit. The Bible has a penetrating power to expose hidden evil, and that, and that alone, is what will do it. It is the Bible's capacity to expose hidden evil. You and I are always putting on our fronts. We're always carrying on with people with that facade that we put on that we think is acceptable. And behind that facade sometimes is a very devastating mental attitude evil – a mental attitude sin, and a lack of mental attitude love. But the Word of God cuts right through that, and it is capable of piercing and exposing that evil within us.

The fifth quality says that the Bible is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart; that is, of the mind. The Bible is capable of evaluating a person's true character; his true motivations; and, his true thinking.

So the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (the Bible) is the powerful instrument for attack in the angelic conflict and for our defense.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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