

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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A SERMON
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*“Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
Ephesians 6:17.*

TO be a Christian is to be a warrior. The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world; it is a battlefield. Neither must he reckon upon the friendship of the world, for that would be enmity against God. His occupation is war. As he puts on piece by piece the panoply provided for him, he may wisely say to himself, “This warns me of danger; this prepares me for warfare; this prophesies opposition.”

Difficulties meet us even in standing our ground, for the apostle, two or three times, bids us—“Stand.” In the rush of the fight, men are apt to be carried off their legs. If they can keep their footing, they will be victorious, but if they are borne down by the rush of their adversaries, everything is lost. You are to put on the heavenly armor in order that you may stand, and you will need it to maintain the position in which your Captain has placed you. If even to stand requires all this care, judge you what the warfare must be! The apostle also speaks of *withstanding* as well as standing. We are not merely to defend, but also to assail. It is not enough that you are not conquered, you have to conquer, and therefore we find, that we are to take, not only a helmet to protect the head, but also a sword, with which to annoy the foe. Ours, therefore, is a stern conflict, standing and withstanding, and we shall need all the armor from the divine magazine, all the strength from the mighty God of Jacob.

It is clear from our text that our defense and our conquest must be obtained by sheer fighting. Many try compromise, but if you are a true Christian, you can never do this business well. The language of deceit fits not a holy tongue. The adversary is the father of lies, and those that are with him understand the art of equivocation, but saints abhor it. If we discuss terms of peace, and attempt to gain something by policy, we have entered upon a course from which we shall return in disgrace. We have no order from our Captain to patch up a truce, and get as good terms as we can. We are not sent out to offer concessions. It is said that if we yield a little, perhaps the world will yield a little also, and good may come of it. If we are not too strict and narrow, perhaps, sin will kindly consent to be more decent. Our association with it will prevent its being so barefaced and atrocious. If we are not narrow-minded, our broad doctrine will go down with the world, and those on the other side will not be as greedy of error as they now are. No such thing. Assuredly this is not the order which our Captain has issued. When peace is to be made, He will make it Himself, or He will tell us how to behave to that end, but at present our orders are very different.

Neither may we hope to gain by being neutral, or granting an occasional truce. We are not to cease from conflict, and try to be as agreeable as we can with our Lord's foes, frequenting their assemblies, and tasting their dainties. No such orders are written here. You are to grasp your weapon, and go forth to fight.

Neither may you so much as dream of winning the battle by accident. No man was ever holy by a happy chance. Infinite damage may be done by carelessness, but no man ever won life's battle by it. To let things go on as they please is to let them bear us down to hell. We have no orders to be quiet, and take matters easily. No, we are to pray always, and watch constantly. The one note that rings out from the text is this—TAKE THE SWORD! TAKE THE SWORD! No longer is it, talk and debate! No longer is it, parley and compromise! The word of thunder is—*Take the sword*. The Captain's voice is clear as

a trumpet—*Take the sword!* No Christian man here will have been obedient to our text unless with clear, sharp, and decisive firmness, courage, and resolve, he takes the sword. We must go to heaven sword in hand, all the way. “TAKE THE SWORD.” On this command I would enlarge. May the Holy Spirit help me!

It is noteworthy that there is only one weapon of offense provided, although there are several pieces of armor. The Roman soldier usually carried a spear as well as a sword. We have seen frequent representations of the legionary standing upon guard as sentry, and he almost always stands with a spear in his right hand, while his sword hangs at his side. But Paul, for excellent reasons, concentrates our offensive weapon in one, because it answers for all. We are to use *the sword* and that only. Therefore, if you are going to this fight, see well to your only weapon. If you are to have no other, take care that you have this always in your hand. Let the Captain’s voice ring in your ear, “*Take the sword! Take the sword!*” and so go forth to the field.

Notice, first, *the sword you are to take is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* That is our first head, and the second is equally upon the surface of the text: *This sword is to be ours.* We are ordered to take the sword of the Spirit, and so make it our own sword.

I. First, the Word of God which is to be our one weapon is of noble origin, for IT IS “THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.” It has the properties of a sword, and those were given it by the Spirit of God.

Here we note that *the Holy Spirit has a sword.* He is quiet as the dew, tender as the anointing oil, soft as the zephyr of eventide, and peaceful as a dove, and yet, under another aspect, He wields a deadly weapon. He is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning, and He bears not the sword in vain. Of Him it may be said, “The Lord is a man of war: Jehovah is His name.”

The Word of God in the hand of the Spirit wounds very terribly, and makes the heart of man to bleed. Do you not remember, some of you, when you used to be gashed with this sword Sunday after Sunday? Were you not cut to the heart by it, so as to be angry with it? You almost made up your mind to turn away from hearing the gospel again. That sword pursued you, and pierced you in the secrets of your soul, and made you bleed in a thousand places. At last you were “pricked in the heart,” which is a far better thing than being “cut to the heart,” and then execution was done, indeed. That wound was deadly, and none but He that killed could make you alive. Do you recollect how, after this, your sins were slain one after another? Their necks were laid on the block, and the Spirit acted as an executioner with His sword. After that, blessed be God, your fears, and doubts, and despair, and unbelief, were also hacked to pieces by this same sword. The Word gave you life, but it was at the first a great killer. Your soul was like a battlefield after a great fight, under the first operations of the divine Spirit, whose sword returns not empty from the conflict.

Beloved, the Spirit of God has war with the Amalek of evil and error from generation to generation. He will spare none of the evils which now pollute the nations; His sword will never be quiet till all these Canaanites are destroyed. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ not only by what He reveals, but also by what He overturns. The strife may be weary, but it will be carried on from age to age, till the Lord Jesus shall appear, forever shall the Spirit of God espouse the cause of love against hate, of truth against error, of holiness against sin, of Christ against Satan. He will win the day, and those who are with Him shall in His might, be more than conquerors. The Holy Spirit has proclaimed war, and wields a two-edged sword.

The Holy Spirit wields no sword but the Word of God. This wonderful Book, which contains the utterances of God’s mouth, is the one weapon which the Holy Spirit elects to use for His war-like purposes. It is a spiritual weapon, and so is suitable to the Holy Spirit. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal; He never uses either persecution, or patronage, force or bribery, glitter of grandeur, or terror of power. He works upon men by the Word, which is suitable to His own spiritual nature, and to the spiritual work which is to be accomplished. While it is spiritual, this weapon is “mighty through God.” A cut from the Word of God will cleave a man’s spirit from head to foot, so sharp is this sword. Though by long practice in sin a man may have coated himself as with impenetrable mail, yet the Word of the Lord will divide the northern iron and the steel. The Holy Spirit can make a man feel the divine power of the sacred Word in the very center of his being. For battling with the spirits of man, or with spirits of an infernal kind, there is no weapon so keen, so piercing, so able to divide between the joints and marrow, so

penetrating as to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word, in the Spirit's hand, gives no flesh wound, but cuts into the man's heart and so wounds him that there is no healing save by supernatural power. The wounded conscience will bleed; its pains will be upon it day and night; and though it seeks out a thousand medicines, no salve but one can cure a gash which this terrible sword has made. This weapon is two-edged, indeed, it is all edge, and whichever way it strikes, it wounds and kills. There is no such a thing as the flat of the sword of the Spirit; it has a razor edge every way. Beware how you handle it, you critics, it may wound even you; it will cut you to your destruction, one of these days, unless you are converted. He that uses the Word in the Lord's battles may use it upon carnal hopes, and then strike back upon unbelieving fears. He may smite with one edge, the love of sin, and then with the other the pride of self-righteousness. It is a conquering weapon in all ways, this wondrous sword of the Spirit of God.

The Word, we say, is the only sword which the Spirit uses. I know the Holy Spirit uses gracious sermons, but it is only in proportion as they have the Word of God in them. I know the Holy Spirit uses religious books, but only so far as they are the Word of God told out in other language. Conviction, conversion, and consolation still are worked, and only by the Word of God. Learn, then, the wisdom of using the Word of God for holy purposes. The Spirit has abundant ability to speak of His own self, apart from the written Word. The Holy Spirit is God, and therefore He is the greatest spirit in the universe. All wisdom dwells in Him. He thought out the laws which govern nature and direct providence. The Holy Spirit is the great teacher of human spirits; He taught Bezaleel and the artificers in the wilderness how to make the fine linen, and the gold and carved work for the Tabernacle. All arts and sciences are perfectly known to Him, and infinitely more than men can ever discover. Yet He will not use these things in this holy controversy. In the quarrel of His covenant He uses neither philosophy, nor science, nor rhetoric. In contending against the powers of darkness, "The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God." "It is written" is His masterstroke. Words which God has spoken by holy men of old, and has caused to be recorded on the sacred page—these are the battle-axe and weapons of war of His Spirit. This Book contains the Word of God, and is the Word of God, and this it is which the Holy Spirit judges to be so effectual a weapon against evil that He uses this, and this only, as His sword in the great conflict with the powers of darkness.

The Word is the sword of the Spirit because it is of His own making. He will not use a weapon of human workmanship, lest the sword boast itself against the hand that wields it. The Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God to the minds of holy men; He spoke the word into their hearts, and thus He made them think as He would have them think, and to write what He willed them to write, so that what they spoke and wrote was spoken and written as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Blessed be the Holy Spirit for deigning to use so many writers, and yet Himself to remain the veritable Author of this collection of holy books. We are grateful for Moses, for David, for Isaiah, for Paul, for Peter, for John, but most of all for that superintending Editor, that innermost Author of the whole sacred volume—even the Holy Spirit. A warrior may well be careful as to the make of His sword. If a man had made his own sword, had tempered the metal, had himself passed the blade through many fires, and worked it to perfection, then, if he were a skillful workman, he would feel confidence in his sword. When work is done nowadays, it is, as a rule, badly done. Work done by contract is usually inadequate in some part or another, but when a man does a work for himself he is likely to do it thoroughly, and produce an article which he can depend upon. The Holy Spirit has made this Book Himself; every portion of it bears His initial and impress, and thus He has a sword worthy of His own hand, a true Jerusalem blade of heavenly fabric. He delights to use a weapon so divinely made, and He does use it right gloriously.

The Word of God is also the sword of the Spirit because He puts the edge upon it. It is because He is in it that it is so keen and cutting. I believe in the inspiration of Holy Scripture, not only in the day when it was written, but onward, and even to this day. It is still inspired; still does the Holy Spirit breathe through the chosen words. I told you the sword was all edge, but I would add that the Holy Spirit makes it so. It would have no edge at all if it were not for His presence within it, and His perpetual working by it. How many people read their Bibles, and yet derive no more benefit from it than if they had read an old almanac! In fact, they would more easily keep awake over an ancient Bradshaw than over a chapter of Scripture. The ministers of the gospel may preach God's Word in all sincerity and purity, and yet, if

the Spirit of God is not present, we might as well have preached mere moral essays, for no good can come of our testimony. The Holy Spirit rides in the chariot of Scripture, and not in the wagon of modern thought. Scripture is that Ark of the Covenant which contains the golden pot of manna, and also bears above it the divine light of God's shining. The Spirit of God works in, by, and through, and with the Word, and if we keep to that Word, we may rest assured that the Holy Spirit will keep with us, and make our testimony to be a thing of power. Let us pray the blessed Spirit to put an edge on our preaching, lest we say much and accomplish little. Hear us in this thing, O blessed One!

It is "the sword of the Spirit" because *He alone can instruct us in the use of it*. You think, young man that you can pick up your Bible, and go and preach from it at once, properly and successfully. You have made a presumptuous mistake. A sword is a weapon which may do hurt to the man who flourishes with it in mere wanton pride. No one can handle the sword of the Spirit aright save the chosen man whom God has ordained from before the foundation of the world, and trained in feats of arms. By this the elect of God are known—that they love the Word of God, and they have a reverence for it, and discern between it and the words of man. Notice the lambs in the field, just now, and there may be a thousand ewes and lambs, but every lamb can find its own mother. So does a true-born child of God know where to go for the milk which is to nourish his soul. The sheep of Christ know the Shepherd's voice in the Word, and a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers. God's own people have discernment to discover and relish God's own Word. They will not be misled by the cunning craftiness of human devices. Saints know the Scriptures by inward instinct. The holy life, which God has infused into believers by His Spirit, loves the Scriptures, and learns how to use them for holy purposes. Young soldier, you must go to the training ground of the Holy Spirit to be made a proficient swordsman. You will go in vain to the metaphysician or to the logician, for neither of these knows how to handle a spiritual weapon. In other arts they may be masters, but in the sacred use of divine theology they are mere fools. In the things of the Word we are dunces till we enter the school of the Holy Spirit. He must take of the things of Christ, and show them to us. He must teach us how to grip this sword by faith, and how to hold it by watchfulness, so as to parry the adversary's thrust, and carry the war into the foeman's territory. He is well taught who can swing this great two-handed sword to and fro, and mow a lane through the midst of his opponents, and come out a conqueror at the end. It may take a long time to learn this art, but we have a right skillful Teacher. Those of us who have been in this warfare thirty or forty years feel that we have not yet reached the full use of this sword; no, I know for one, that I need daily to be taught how to use this mysterious weapon, which is capable of so much more than I have yet supposed. It is the sword of the Spirit, adapted for the use of an Almighty arm, and therefore equal to the doing of far more than we think. Holy Spirit, teach us new feats of arms by this Your sword!

But, chiefly, it is the sword of the Spirit, because *He is the great Master in the use of it*. Oh, that He would come and show us this morning how He can thrust and cleave with it! In this house of prayer we have often seen Him at His work. Here the slain of the Lord have been many. We have seen this sword take off the head of many a Goliath doubt, and slay a horde of cares and unbeliefs. We have seen the Spirit pile up heaps on heaps of the slain when the Word of conviction has gone forth, and men have seen sin to be sin, and fallen down as dead before the Lord and His law. We also know what the use of the sword by the Spirit of God means, for within our own being He has left marks of His prowess. He has killed our doubts and fears, and left no more mistrusts to worry us. There was a man of God who was frequently subject to doubts, even doubts upon the fundamentals of religion. He hated this state of mind, but still he could not get rid of the habit of evil questioning. In answer to prayer, the Spirit came, and convinced him of the pride of his intellect, and of the wickedness of setting up his judgment against the Word of the Lord, and from that day forward he was never the subject of another fit of unbelief. He saw things clearly in the light of the Holy Spirit, and that is to see them indeed. The great giant of doubt is sorely wounded by the sword of the Spirit—yes, he is slain outright, for the Spirit works in the believer such a conviction of the truth that assurance banishes suspicion. When the Holy Spirit deals with the lusts of the flesh, and the lusts of the eye and the pride of life, these also lie at His feet, trophies to the power of His mighty weapon, even the Word of God! The Holy Spirit is glorious in the use of this sword. He finds that this weapon suits His hand, and He seeks no other. Let us use it also, and be glad to

do so. Though it is the sword of the Spirit, yet our feeble hand may grasp it; yes, and find in the grasping that somewhat of the divine power comes unto our arm.

Dear brethren, is it not a very high honor put upon you, as soldiers of the cross, that you should be allowed, no, commanded to take the sword of the Spirit? The raw recruit is not trusted with the general's sword, but here you are armed with the weapon of God the Holy Spirit, and called upon to bear that sacred sword which is so gloriously wielded by the Lord God Himself. This we are to bear, and no other. Does the timid heart inquire, "How, my Master, shall I meet my adversaries"? "Here," says the Holy Spirit, "take this! This is My own sword; I have done great marvels with it; take it, and nothing shall stand against you." When you remember the potency of this sword, when the Spirit tests it upon yourself, you may take it with confidence, and use it in your holy war with full assurance. That Word of God which could convert *you*, can convert anybody; if it could kill your despair, it can remove another man's despondency; if it has conquered your pride and self-will, it can subdue the same in your children and your neighbors. Having done what it has certainly done for you, you may have a full persuasion that, before its power, no case is hopeless. Therefore, see to it, that you use from this day forth no other weapon than the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

II. This fairly lands me in the second portion of my discourse. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, but **IT IS ALSO TO BE OUR SWORD.**

Here I must begin again, and go over much of the same ground. *We shall need a sword.* Our warfare is not child's play; we mean business. We have to deal with fierce foes, which are only to be met with keen weapons. Buffets will not suffice in this contest; we must come to sword-cuts. You may be of a very quiet spirit, but your adversaries are not so. If you attempt to play at Christian warfare, they will not. To meet the powers of darkness is no sham battle. They mean mischief. Nothing but your eternal damnation will satisfy the fiendish hearts of Satan and his crew. You must take not so much a flag to unfurl, or a drum to beat, as a sword to use, and an especially sharp sword too. In this combat you will have to use a sword such as even evil spirits can feel, capable of dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. If you are to live through this fight, and come off victorious, no form of conflict will suffice less sharp and cutting than sword-work. Depend upon it that in this struggle you will be forced to come to close quarters. The foe aims at your heart, and pushes home. A spear will not do, nor bow and arrow; the enemy is too near for anything but hand-to-hand fighting. Brethren, our foes are not only of our house, but of our heart. I find an enemy within which is always near, and I cannot get away from him. I find that my antagonist will get his hand on my throat if he can. If our foes were far away, and we could play upon them with artillery which would kill at six or seven miles' distance, we might lead a pretty easy life. But no, they are *here!* At our doors! Yes, within us; nearer than hands and feet. Now for the short sword; the claymore of Holy Scripture, to stab and cut, near and now. No sling and stone will avail us here, but we must take the sword. You have to slay your foe, or your foe will slay you. It is with us Christians as it was with the Highlanders in battle, when their leader called out to them, "Lads, there they are! If you dinna kill them they will kill you." There is no room for peace; it is war to the knife, not only now, but to life's end.

The use of the sword is needful for attack. I have reminded you several times already that it will not suffice for the Christian to guard against sin, and ward off temptation from himself; he has to assail the powers of evil. In our case, the best method of defense is an attack. I have heard of one who would bring an action in law to gain his ends, for he thought this better than being the defendant. That may be matter of question, but in war it is often safer to assail than defend. Carry the warfare into the enemy's territory. Be trying to win from the adversary, and he will not win so much from you. Do not merely be sober yourselves, but attack drunkenness. Do not be content with being free from superstition yourself, but expose it wherever it appears. Do not merely be devout when you feel obliged to be so, but pray for the growth of the kingdom; pray always. Do not merely say, "I will keep Satan out of my family by bringing up my children aright," but go to the Sunday school, and teach other children and so carry the war over the border. God forbid that we should ever go to war as a nation! But if we were at war with some nation on the Continent, I would certainly say, "Let the continentals have the battles on their own ground; we do not want a campaign over here." It is wise to keep the war in the enemy's own regions. If we had

fought the devil more in the world, he might never have been able to invade the church as terribly as he has done. Attack with the sword, for it is your calling, and thus will you best defend yourself.

We need the sword for real fighting. Do you think that you can dream yourselves into heaven? Or ride there in the chariot of ease? Or fly on the wings of brass music? You make a great mistake if you so imagine. A real war is raging, your opponents are in deadly earnest, and you must take your sword.

And, further, *we need this sword, this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* We say with David, "There is none like that; give it to me." It has worked such wonders that we prefer it to all others. No other will match the enemy's weapon. If we fight the devil with human reason, the first time our wooden sword comes in contact with a Satanic temptation it will be cut in pieces. If you do not wield a true Jerusalem blade you are in grave peril; your weapon will break off at the hilt, and where will you be? Standing defenseless, with nothing but the handle of a broken sword in your hand, you will be the object of your adversary's ridicule. You must have this sword, for no other will penetrate the foe, and no other will last out the battle. After twenty years, what has become of the pious resolutions of your youth? What is the staying power of your consecration made in the hour of enthusiasm? Alas, how little trust can be placed in it! What would become of us after thirty years of fighting, if we had not the Word of God to rely upon? The Word of the Lord endures forever, but nothing else does. We may do well in early days, but we shall fail in old age if we have not eternal verities to fall back upon.

I can commend this sword to you all, my brethren, although you are so varied in character. This sword suits every hand. Youth or age may alike use this weapon. These dear girls from the Orphanage, and yonder lads from the Bible class, may fight the battle of their youth with the Word of God, for Holy Scripture may impress and guide our freshest life. You that have grown grey, you that have passed seventy or eighty, you will value the Bible more than ever, and you will find that this sword is the best for veteran warriors. Young men and young women, here is a sword suited for all of you, and well does it become the hand of the feeblest and the gentlest. The Holy Spirit has in the sacred Word prepared an implement of warfare suited for great minds and small, for the cultured and the uneducated. A wonderful sword this is, which, in the hand of faith, reveals an adaptation marvelous to the last degree.

Whatever others may say, it is sufficient for us that this is the regulation sword. A soldier is not left to choose his own equipment; he must carry such arms as his sovereign appoints. This is the regulation sword in Christ's army. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is what you are bidden to take, and if you in willfulness resolve to exchange it for another, you commit an act of rebellion, and you make the change at your own risk and peril. Come, then, let us each take the Word of God, and carry it nearer our hearts than ever, for such is the word of command, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Now, see what we are told to do. We need a sword; we need this sword; *we are to take this sword.* Note that we are not told that we may lay it down; the demand to take the sword is continuous, and there is no hint of its being suspended. There is a time, of course, when the soldier of Her Majesty may remove his sword from his side, and put off his regimentals, but there is never such a time with a Christian. One might have thought, from what we have seen of late, that orders had come from headquarters that the soldiers were to lay down the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and take to lighter weapons. Entertainments, amusements, farces, and sing-song are now used to do what the gospel has failed to achieve! Is it not sadly so? Well, if any will try these silly toys, I can only say that they have no command from their Lord to warrant them in their proceedings. Take all these things, and see what they will do, but you make the trial at your own risk, and on your own heads the result of failure will fall.

The standing orders are to take the sword of the Spirit, and no new regulation has ever been issued by the great Captain of salvation. From the days of Paul till now, the word stands, "Take the sword of the Spirit." All other things will surely fail, and hence the one sole abiding command is, "Take the sword of the Spirit." We are not told to hang up this sword for exhibition. Certain people have a handsomely-bound Bible to lie upon the table of the best room, and a fine ornament it is. A Family Bible is a treasure. But I pray you do not let your love of the Bible end there. With a soldier in war, a sword is not meant to be hung up in the tent, or even to be flourished in the air, but it is issued to be used. Nor are we to push this sword into a sheath, as many do who take the Bible, and add so much of criticism, or of their own opinion to it, that its edge is not felt. Many men use their low opinion of inspiration as a scab-

bard into which they push the Bible down. Their vast knowledge makes a beautiful scabbard and they push down the sword, saying, "Keep still there! O sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!" After we have preached our heart out, and men have felt the power of it, they make a desperate effort to imprison the Word in their unbelieving theory, or in their worldliness. They hold down the Word all the week with a firm hand, for fear its edge or point should wound them. It is the scabbard of culture, or philosophy, or of progress, and in this they shut up the living Word of God as in a coffin.

We are not to bury the Word under other matters, but we are to take it as a sword, which means, as I understand it, first, *believe it*. Believe every portion of it; believe it with a true and real faith, not with a mere creedal faith, which says, "This is the orthodox thing." Believe it as a matter of fact for every day, affecting your life. Believe it. And when you have believed it, then *study it*. Oh, for a closer study of the Word of God! Are there not some of you who have never even heard or read all that the Lord has said? Are there not passages of the Bible which have never been read by you? It is a melancholy fact that there would be even a line of the sacred Scriptures which has never once come under your eye. Do read the Bible right through, from beginning to end. Begin tomorrow; no, begin today, and go steadily through the whole of the sacred books, with prayer and meditation. Never let it be suspected by you that God has recorded truths in His Word which you have never even once read. Study the Word, and work out its meaning. Go deep into the spirit of inspiration. He gets most gold who digs the deepest in this mine. They used to say of certain mines in Cornwall that the deeper you went the richer was the ore; assuredly is it so with the mines of inspired Scripture. The deeper you go under the Spirit's guidance the larger is the reward for your toil. Take the sword with the grip of sincere faith; hold it fast by a fuller knowledge, and then exercise yourself daily in its use. The sword is to be taken for earnest fight. You will not be long before occasion arises in such a world as this. You will have to parry with it, to pierce with it, to cut with it, and to kill with it. "Where shall I begin?" says one. Begin at home, and, for many a day, you will have your hands full. When you have slain all the rebels at home, and long before that, you may take a turn at those around you in the world, and in the professing church. Inside your own heart you will find a band of bandits which should be exterminated. There will always be need to keep the sword going within your own territory. End this civil war before you go into foreign parts. When the war within the city of Mansoul has been victoriously carried through, besiege the heart of your friend, your child, your neighbor. Behold, the world lies in the wicked one! Errors abound, and colossal systems of falsehood still stand aloft. Men are still dragged down by the arch-deceiver. Surely, we feel our swords flying out of their sheaths when we think of the millions who are being ruined by sin and error. Oh, for a mighty onslaught upon the powers of darkness!

Once more, *we are to take this sword with a purpose*. We are to use it that we may be able to stand and to withstand. If you want to stand, draw the sword, and smite your doubts. How fiercely unbelief assails! Here comes a doubt as to your election. Pierce it through with the Word. Soon comes a doubt as to the precious blood. Cleave it from head to foot with the assurance of the Word that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Here comes another doubt, and yet another. As quick as arm can move, drive texts of Scripture through every new fallacy, every new denial of truth, and spit the whole of them upon the rapier of the Word. It will be for your good to kill these doubts outright. Do not play with them, but fight them in real earnest. You will find that temptations also will come in hordes. Meet them with the precepts of sacred Writ, and slay even the desire of evil by the Spirit's application of the Holy Word. The washing of water by the Word is a glorious cleanser. Discouragements will arise like mists of the morning. Oh, that God's Word may shine them away with the beams of the promises! Your afflictions multiply, and you will never be able to overcome impatience and distrust except by the infallible Word of God. You can bear trial, and bear it patiently, if you use this weapon to kill anxiety. You will "stand fast in the evil day," and having done all, you will still stand, if this sword is in your hand.

You have not only to stand fast yourselves, but you have to win souls for Christ. Do not try to conquer sin in others, or capture a heart for Jesus, except with the sword of the Spirit. How the devil laughs when we try to make converts apart from Holy Scripture, and the Holy Spirit! He laughs, I say, for he derides our folly. What can you do, you children, playing with your little wooden swords—what can you do against men covered from head to foot with the steel mail of the habit of sin? Sunday school teachers, teach your children more and more the pure Word of God; and preachers, do not try to be original, but

be content to take of the things of Christ, and show them to the people, for that is what the Holy Spirit Himself does, and you will be wise to use His method and His sword. No sinner around you will be saved except by the knowledge of the great truths contained in the Word of God. No man will ever be brought to repentance, to faith, and to life in Christ, apart from the constant application of the truth through the Spirit. I hear great shouting, great noises everywhere, about great things that are going to be done; let us see them. The whole world is going to be embraced within the church, so they say. I fear the world will not be much the better for inclusion in such a church. Big boasters should heed the word of the wise man, “Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that puts it off.” If the champion goes forth with any other sword than the Word of God, he had better not boast at all, for he will come back with his sword broken, his shield cast away, and himself grimy with dishonor. Defeat awaits that man who forsakes the Word of the Lord.

I have done when I have asked you to remember that the text is in the present tense; *Take unto you the sword of the Spirit even now*. What varieties of people there are here this morning! Believers have come here in all sorts of perils; let them each one take the sword of the Spirit, and they will overcome every foe. Here, too, are seekers who wish to be Christians, but they cannot compass it. What is the matter this morning? “Oh,” says one, “I have been in the habit of sinning, and the habit is very strong upon me.” Fight with sinful habits with the Word of God, as the sword of the Spirit; so only will you conquer your evil self. Find a text of Scripture that will cleave your sin down to the backbone, or stab it to the heart. “Alas! Satan tempts me horribly,” cries one, “I have been lately assailed in many ways.” Have you? You are not the first. Our divine Lord in the wilderness was tempted of the devil. He might have fought Satan with a thousand weapons, but He chose to defeat him with this one only. He said, “It is written; it is written; it is written.” He pricked the foeman so sorely with this sharp point that the arch-adversary thought to try the same sword, and he also began to say, “It is written.” But he cut himself with this sword, for he did not quote the passages correctly, nor give the whole of them, and the Master soon found the way to knock aside his sword, and wound him still more. Follow your Lord’s example. “Oh, but,” says one, “I am so low in spirits.” Very well; fight lowness of spirits with the Word of God. “The doctor recommended me,” says one, “to take a little spirits to raise my spirits.” Those doctors are always having this sin laid to their charge. I am not so sure that they are not often maligned. You like the dose, and that is why you take it. Try the Word of God for lowness of spirits, and you will have found a sure remedy. I find, if I can lay a promise under my tongue, like a sweet lozenge, and keep it in my mouth or mind all the day long, I am happy enough. If I cannot find a Scripture to comfort me, then my inward troubles are multiplied. Fight despondency and despair with the sword of the Spirit. I cannot tell what your particular difficulty may be at this moment, but I give you this direction for all holy warfare—“Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” You must overcome every enemy, and this weapon is all you need. If you, my hearer, would overcome sin and conquer unbelief, take such a word as this, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” and as you look you shall be saved, and doubt shall die, and sin be slain. God grant you His Spirit’s aid, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 6.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—917, 673, 672.

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