

The Ultimate Weapon

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[0:00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. If you'd like to learn more about us, please check out FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. Our heart is to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let that Word get into us and transform us more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, in the 1880s, a young baseball player named Billy Sunday began playing professionally for the Chicago White Stockings. He quickly made a name for himself as the fastest player in baseball. Although he was considered an average pro player by most accounts, his charismatic personality made him a big hit with the fans. He was also pretty good at stealing bases and tracking down a ball when others couldn't in the outfield.

Well, just a few years into his career, he stumbled upon somebody preaching the gospel and felt deeply convicted of his need for Jesus. He gave his life to the Lord immediately, joining a church where his faith began to grow.

[1:11] As he continued in his baseball career, he finally concluded that God had a different calling on his life. And in 1891, he was offered a baseball contract of \$3,500 a year.

That would be well over \$100,000 today. But he decided to leave it all behind to accept a ministry position at the YMCA for less than \$1,000 a year.

He proved faithful and over time became one of the greatest evangelists of his generation, literally preaching to millions of people.

After his death, a paper was found in his Bible that shows why God could use this man so powerfully, shows his view on the Word of God.

Here's what he said. 29 years ago, with the Holy Spirit as my guide, I entered the portico of Genesis, walked down the corridor of the Old Testament art galleries, where pictures of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Isaac, Jacob, and Daniel hung on the wall.

[2:18] I passed into the music room of Psalms, where the Spirit sweeps the keyboard of nature until it seems like every reed and pipe and God's great organ responds to the harp of David, the sweet singer of Israel.

He says, I entered the chamber of Ecclesiastes, where the voice of the preacher is heard, and into the conservatory of Sharon and the lily of the valley, where sweet spices filled and perfumed my life.

I entered the business office of Proverbs, and on into the observatory of the prophets, where I saw telescopes of various sizes pointing to far-off events, concentrating on the bright and morning star, which was to rise above the moonlit hills of Judea for our salvation and redemption.

I entered the audience room of the King of Kings, catching a vision written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then into the correspondence room of Paul, Peter, James, and John writing the epistles.

I stepped into the throne room of Revelation, where tower the glittering peaks, where sits the King of Kings upon his throne of glory, with the healing of nations in his hand.

[3:27] And I cried out, he says, All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall! Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him, crown him Lord of all!

What a beautiful way to describe God's truth as we come to week eight of this series all about spiritual warfare, all about the spiritual battle that you and I face every day.

So go ahead and open up to Ephesians 6, where we are learning to stand firm in the power of Christ. So far, we've talked about the enemies we face. That's the world, the flesh, and Satan.

We've put on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes fitted with the gospel of peace. We've taken up the shield of faith. We've put on the helmet of salvation.

And then today, in Ephesians 6, 17, the second half of that verse, God's word says, Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

[4 : 28] Now, what I love about the sword of the Spirit is that you don't have to figure out what Paul's talking about. He makes it abundantly clear, comparing a physical sword to the spiritual equivalent of the word of God.

And in this imagery, Paul isn't talking about the big sword that you see in all the Zorro or Three Musketeer movies, okay? He's talking about a common sword that the Roman foot soldiers used for hand-to-hand combat.

They were usually made to fit each soldier. And so the sword was usually somewhere between maybe 10 and 18 inches long, because the enemy, to be quite frank with you here, is always right up in your business trying to take you down.

So you couldn't have one of those really long swords. It was a small sword for hand-to-hand combat. Now, I love at the end of a workday going home to my kids that are usually excited to see me.

I said, usually. And one thing, my girls, who are three and seven right now, one thing they've been doing lately, and I don't know why they're on this kick, but if I'm sitting on the couch or in the dining room chair or in the recliner, they will just climb up my body and get on my shoulders, plop down on my shoulders.

[5 : 43] And I'll be honest with you, sometimes when you work a long, hard day at work, the last thing you want is someone just climbing all over you and then plopping 30 or 40 pounds on your neck.

And yet, as a parent, you also know that your kids miss you and you want to love on them and play with them. But listen, there are just those moments, and you moms probably understand this way better than us dads, but there are those moments where you just don't want somebody all up in your business, right?

You just need some time to decompress before we go there. Now, I feel bad transitioning from my kids to Satan, and I'll probably never live this down, but here goes anyways. The enemy also wants to get up all up in your business.

But he's not like our kids. He's not innocent and loving. He's sneaky. He's deceptive. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy your faith in Christ. He wants you so defeated that you are rendered useless for the kingdom.

So overwhelmed and so stressed that you aren't even walking in the joy, peace, and freedom that is available to you in Christ. So enamored by the shiny things of this world that you never discover true contentment.

[6 : 54] And you know what? He's done a pretty good job with his mission in the lives of so many believers. This battle is up close and personal. And what does Paul call us to do?

Paul, to take up the sword of the Spirit. The only offensive weapon discussed in this entire passage. Now, if you're a note taker, you can always go to the YouVersion Bible app.

You can go to the menu down at the bottom right-hand corner, those three lines, click on that or hit on that. And then you can go to events, go to First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, and you can see our outline that way.

But here's the first thing I want you to see. You can't wield the sword without the Holy Spirit. You can't wield the sword without the Holy Spirit.

You can even write out to the side there, you can't do it in your own power. You have to take up the sword of what? The Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 54] See, in John 14, starting in verse 16, Jesus, knowing that He'll be going back to the Father, He gives His disciples this promise, this comfort.

He says, See, the Holy Spirit is God living inside of born-again believers in Jesus Christ.

And some of the main purposes, according to the Word, the Holy Spirit transforms our lives, convicts us of sin, guides us to truth, emboldens us to proclaim Christ, imparts spiritual gifts, empowers us to worship, and He leads us through everything life throws our way.

And everything He does lines up perfectly with the Word of God. So when we are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, according to the Word of God, we are taking up our sword, and we are

going after that enemy.

And listen, listen to this description from an 18th century Scottish pastor named Thomas Guthrie. He describes what the Bible is to our lives when the Spirit is in control of me.

[9 : 18] He says, The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is the guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound.

There were two cows that were grazing in a pasture when they saw a milk truck drive by. And on the side of the truck were the words pasteurized, homogenized, standardized, vitamin A added. And one of the cows just kind of went, and he looked at the other cow and he said, you know, it just makes you feel sort of inadequate, doesn't it? Well, listen, people are always trying to improve on things like milk, but one thing we'll never be able to improve upon is the milk of God's Word. It doesn't need to be pasteurized, homogenized, standardized, or anything added to it. It just needs to be read in the power of the Holy Spirit who has a way of taking that Word and transforming these hearts more into the image of Christ.

If you're going to be a skilled spiritual swordsman, it starts by operating in the Holy Spirit's power and not in your own. Making sure that your life daily is surrendered to His leading from the second your feet hit the floor in the morning.

[10 : 41] And then here's the second thing I want you to see. You can't wield the sword without the Holy Spirit, one, but second, without obedience. Now, from time to time, you'll hear me talk about the original languages the Bible was written in.

So just to refresh here, the Old Testament is mostly Hebrew. The New Testament was primarily written in Koine Greek. Koine means common, so common Greek.

And there are three different Greek words to describe the Word of God. And this context allows us to fully grasp how we can be effective with the sword of the Spirit.

Now, the first Greek word is graphe. Graphe. This is where we get the English word graffiti. It's the written word, the ink on the page, the words on the paper.

I am holding the physical graphe of God. Now, George Foreman, you know the guy who used to sell those little indoor grills?

[11 : 40] Oh yeah, he was also the heavyweight boxing champ of the world before that. But in his book, he talks about how when he was getting ready to head to Africa to fight Muhammad Ali, a friend gave him a Bible.

And the guy said, George, keep this with you for good luck. And so, George added it with his lucky penny, his lucky rabbit's foot, and now he had a lucky Bible. But when he lost that fight, he threw it away because it didn't help him to win.

Well, later, when he came to Christ, he said, you know, I thought I'd get power from simply owning that Bible. I didn't realize that I needed to read it and believe what it says.

And that leads us to the second word here. So that's logos. Logos. Graphe is the written word in my hand. And then logos is the message of the word.

I'm reading the physical words. The logos is when it becomes more than just words on a page. The message of the word of God takes a hold of my heart.

[12 : 41] And that's the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. We see this word logos used in John chapter 1. Starting in verse 1, it says, In the beginning was the word.

That's the word logos. Logos. And the word, the logos, was with God. And the word, the logos, was God. He was with God in the beginning. It goes on a few verses later to say that the word is Jesus. See, we see Jesus, that logos, and it's amazing when the message of Christ comes alive in your heart giving you understanding. But listen, when Paul tells us to take up the sword of the Spirit, he's not talking about graphe or logos.

He uses the word rhema, the spoken word. This is the message of God lived out in your life. This is taking the word of God that's brought understanding and practicing it every day.

It's declaring and sharing it through your mouth and your lifestyle. This is when the word of God, the graphe, becomes the message of God, logos, through you living it out in obedience, rhema.

[13 : 48] So what does that mean? It means you can have a hundred Bibles on your bookshelf and about every translation possible and not be using the sword of the Spirit.

You can know every single word on the page and not be transformed by it or even care about living it out. Just look at the example of most of the religious leaders in Jesus' day.

These guys had memorized the word. They knew the graphe. They could debate any theological issue that you wanted to talk about, but their hearts were so very hardened because of disobedience.

In fact, in Matthew 5, starting in 19, Jesus says, therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[14:50] Those very guys who stood up and taught the word, who were supposed to be shepherding God's people, they were the same ones who felt threatened by Jesus. They conspired against him.

Tell me if this sounds like God's word, right? They conspired against him, made up lies, broke laws to arrest him, mocked him as he suffered, and had the innocent son of God killed, murdered, while they let a real threat named Barabbas run free.

This graphe can't do anything until these hearts are open to God's truth. And God's truth is not meant to just put you in a pew on a Sunday morning to feel warm and toasty about yourself.

This truth is meant to transform, transform your life, lead you to wield the sword to take up the word of God as that weapon against the attacks of the enemy.

And that requires obedience. Now, another cool thing about this word rhema is that it also implies that it speaks directly into certain situations in your life.

[15:51] In other words, in every season, no matter what you are walking through right now, the rhema, the sword, the word, wants to speak into it. But it requires obedience to the word on our end.

Let me show you. In the book of Acts, which is the history of the early church as Jesus ascends back up into heaven, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus' disciples for the first time and they speak in languages they didn't know to people who had gathered there to hear the gospel message.

People from all over the world could hear the gospel in their native tongue. So as they preach that simple message of Christ, it says that thousands of people were cut to the heart and they asked Peter and the others, they said, what shall we do?

We've heard the message, now what do we do about it basically? And here's what Acts 2.38 says, Peter replied, repent and be baptized. Every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

See, the words on the page that Grafe was preached, the message took hold and it convicted them deeply of their need for Jesus as Lord and Savior. And then Peter called them to obedience to turn away from that sinful lifestyle, make a sincere and wholehearted commitment to Jesus being baptized before him.

[17:20] That took obedience. So realizing that most people that I'm preaching to have given their heart to Christ, where now is he calling you to obedience?

In your marriage? In how you love and respect your spouse maybe? How about in your purity? How you choose modesty when it comes to your body?

How you choose to honor God in your dating relationship? In that grudge that we shouldn't be holding where forgiveness and reconciliation need to happen? In the integrity you walk in at work or in your business?

Maybe with that secret sin that we keep running to instead of running to Jesus? Is it in how we show respect to authority that God has placed over us? In getting yourself connected in the body of Christ where you're doing life alongside others?

Even in using your gifts to love and serve Jesus? There's probably as many areas that need our obedience to God's word as there are people that are listening to this. So let's look at Jesus' words in Matthew 7 that might just make you feel like singing a pretty well-known Sunday school song.

[18:33] But here's what Jesus says. Verse 24. Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice. So he's talking about rhema. He's talking about obedience to the word of God.

He said, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and

beat against that house.

Yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice. That's a lot of people sitting in church.

I'm just telling you. Everyone who hears these words and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Church, one of the very reasons I labor over the word of God, probably putting between 20 and 25 hours a week into preparing each Sunday morning message is because I am tired of seeing the church of Jesus Christ go into battle without the sword of the spirit.

[19 : 38] I'm exhausted watching generations of Christians who just sit in church every week still biblically illiterate. It's draining when you see kids come up through our children and youth ministries that are preaching the word of God boldly and trying to disciple our kids, and you see them come up and you see them have great gifts for God's glory, and then you watch them walk away from Christ.

I'm worn out seeing people that I love building their foundation on sand shocked when it starts to crumble. And here David is saying to us, don't just have the grappe on your coffee table at home as a good luck charm.

Don't just understand the logos, the message of it, but put it into practice. Watch how the Holy Spirit will lead you in victory.

Church, it takes obedience to God's word. And every day as you choose, and this is the key word, as you choose to follow Christ through his word, you start to get more and more skilled with that sword where you can deflect the enemy's attacks.

You can even start to advance forward carrying the banner of Christ into a dark world. See, you can't wield the sword in your own power. You can't wield it without obedience.

[20 : 55] You can't wield it without the Holy Spirit. And let me point you to one more important truth as we get extremely practical. You can't wield the sword without discipline.

There must be full-on commitment to God's word to allow that truth to have its way in our minds, in our hearts. In one of the old Charlie Brown Peanuts comic strips, Sally was struggling to remember exactly where her memory verse for church was on Sunday, where it was in the Bible.

She was absorbed with her own thoughts trying to figure this out when she remembered, well, maybe it was something from the book of re-evaluation. Well, she never did find that book in the Bible, but we always read the word with the intent of re-evaluating our attitudes, our actions, to make sure they are in line with the truth of God's word.

Because when we discipline ourselves with a steady diet of God's word, when we allow truth to immerse our minds daily, to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, when we surrender our will, our ways before God's holy truth, we become expert swordsmen that go into spiritual battles and walk out the victor.

So let me share an important passage as we start to land the plane here. First is Hebrews 4.12. It says, for the word of God is alive and active.

[22 : 25] Listen, there's a lot of great books out there. A lot of books that you and I have read that we really do enjoy, whether it's entertainment or whether it's informational, whatever it is, there's some great books out there, but this is the difference between them and the word of God.

They were written and now they're stagnant. That's all that it is. But the word of God is alive and active because the Holy Spirit is moving through it. And then it says, sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints, and marrow.

And then it says it judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. Truth is dealing with everything inside of these hearts.

And you can always tell when you encounter someone who has sat before truth and been changed by it, put it into practice because they're different in an awesome way.

But you and I have a choice to make as believers. We can let that Bible sit on the end table collecting dust or it can constantly be in our hands. John Bunyan who wrote one of the most famous Christian books of all time, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he once put it like this.

[23 : 31] He said, either this book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book. And wow are those powerful and true words. See church, it takes us having discipline.

Discipline in the Word of God. But most importantly, we let the Word get into us. So we got to get into the Word, but we let the Word get into our minds and our hearts so God can transform us daily

more and more into the image of Christ.

There are some powerful weapons in the world today, and yet none is more powerful than the ultimate weapon, and that's the truth of God's Word.

And I simply want to leave you with these words today from Psalm 1830. It says, As for God, His way is perfect. The Lord's Word is flawless.

He shields all who take refuge in Him. So let's do this, church. Let's pick up our sword in the power of the Holy Spirit, and let's claim the victory that is ours in Christ.

[24 : 34] Amen? All right, pray with me. Heavenly Father, thank you for your words of hope, your words of life that you have spoken over us today.

Father, as your followers, it's so easy to get bombarded by life, to let Satan convince us that we are too busy to take time to do the most important thing, and that is get into the Word of God and on our knees in prayer every day.

So, Father, help us to realize that this Word of God is powerful, and it can transform these hearts when we don't just have a Bible, but we get into it, and we read it, and we understand the message, and then we put it into practice in our everyday lives.

Help us, Father, where we struggle to discipline ourselves. Help us to make this commitment, because we always make time for what's truly important to us. And so, help us to make that commitment to Your Word, to get into it every day, but most of all, let it get into us, and transform these hearts more and more into the image of Christ.

So, Jesus, we give You permission, mold these hearts, shape these hearts more and more, so we look like Christ. We love You, Jesus.

[25 : 56] We pray all of these things in Your precious, in Your holy name, and God's people said, Amen and Amen. Hey, I want to give you just a quick invitation.

If you're listening to this right now, and maybe you have some faith questions, maybe you were convicted and you'd like to talk about giving your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, maybe you have some questions about the church.

Here's a couple ways that you can reach out to us. Here at First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, once again, my name is Ray Sweet. You can reach out to us in the office, Monday through Thursday between 8 and 430, and our phone number is 812-663-8488.

That's 812-663-8488. Or, you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

ray at fccgreensburg.com. Hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. We pray that God's word has pierced your heart and you will walk away from this message looking more like Jesus.

[27 : 02] God bless you and have a great week.