

9 - THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

*“17 and take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God,”*
Ephesians 6:17 (ESV)

(Context: READ Ephesians 6:10-20)

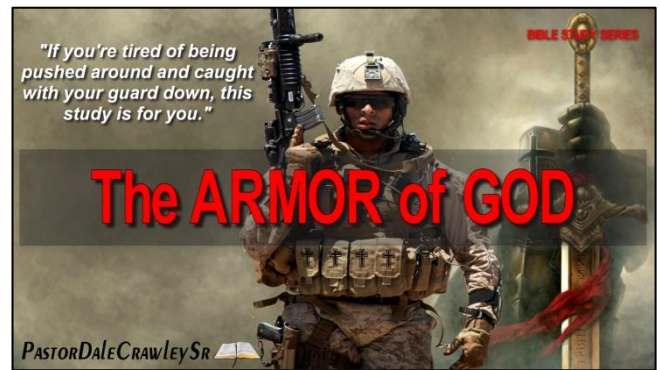
The Word of God is a “Sword” ...

Paul defines the sword of the Spirit as the **“word of God”** (Ephesians 6:17). This isn't the only place where God's Word (the Bible) is described as a sword. The author of Hebrews also makes reference to it: ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*** (Hebrews 4:12-13).

The Word of God is even sharper than the Roman sword. It is capable of piercing to the deepest levels of one's heart and attitude, and it is also a tool of discernment in the hands of the skilled user.

The sword is the only item listed by Paul that serves in an offensive capacity. Even if we have all the rest of the armor equipped perfectly, without our sword, we amount to little more than heavily armored moving targets.

Knowing this raises two important questions: Is the sword of the Spirit only for use as an offensive weapon? And who is the foe against which the sword is to be used?



What did the Roman sword look like?

The sword used by Roman soldiers was a short sword known as a **gladius**; and in the hands of a skilled man, it was a fearsome weapon. In fact, it became known as the sword that conquered the world. It was sharpened on both sides, making it lethal against an unarmored foe. The point was also sharpened, enabling it to pierce armor.



Usually around 20 to 30 inches long, the gladius was not the medieval-style long sword usually associated with the armor of God.

This Roman sword was light (around 2 pounds), short and designed to be wielded easily with one hand while the other hand grasped the shield. Its size meant it could be drawn in close quarters, and its sharpened edges made it a threat to any enemy who got too close. When sharpened, its dual edges wreaked havoc on unarmored foes, while its tapered point could pierce through even heavy metal armor.

The all-powerful sword of the living God ... is able to cut through every defense our enemy can raise—down to the very division of bone and marrow. When wielded by a servant of God, nothing can withstand its ability to cut straight to the core of a matter and uncover the truth.

As soldiers in God's army, it is our responsibility and duty to use His Word to discern the truth and then follow it. When God's Word shows us something wrong in ourselves, we can use this spiritual weapon to *"surgically"* remove the offending thoughts and actions (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Unlike all other pieces of the armor of God, which are solely defensive ... **the sword** is uniquely suited for both defensive and offensive roles. A solid defense is invaluable, but the sword is the only way we can complete the work we have been given to do. **Notice that Jesus Christ used the Bible to counter Satan's attacks (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).**

THE RHEMA WORD ... What Is a "Rhema"?

Logos—The Word of God

There are two primary Greek words that describe Scripture which are translated *"word"* in the New Testament. The first, **logos**, refers principally to the total inspired Word of God and to Jesus, Who is the living *Logos*.

- ***"In the beginning was the Word [logos], and the Word [logos] was with God, and the Word [logos] was God"*** (John 1:1).
- ***"Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word [logos] of truth"*** (2 Timothy 2:15).

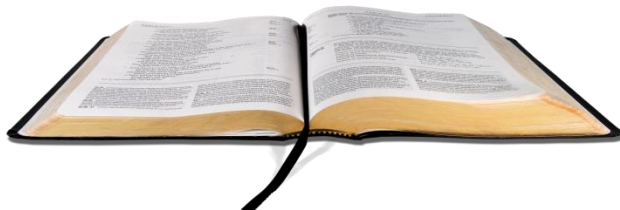
Rhema—The Spoken Word

The second primary Greek word that describes Scripture is *rhema*, which refers to **a word that is spoken and means "an utterance."** A *rhema* is a verse or portion of Scripture that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention with application to a current situation or need for direction.

Every word of God is inspired, and "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). **It is the Holy Spirit Who illuminates particular Scriptures for application in a daily walk with the Lord!**

The words of Jesus are significant on this point. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word [rhema] that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Jesus also stated, **"The words [rhema] that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"** (John 6:63).

When God gives **a rhema** for us to act upon ... He often confirms it by a second **rhema**, that *“in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word [rhema] be established”* (2 Corinthians 13:1). In other words ... **rhema** is the word which the Lord speaks the second time. This is something living!



The purpose of the sword of the Spirit—the Bible—is to make us strong and able to withstand the evil onslaughts of Satan, our enemy (Psalm 119:11, 33–40, 99–105).

The Holy Spirit uses the power of the Word to save souls and then to give them spiritual strength to be mature soldiers for the Lord in fighting this corrupt and evil world we live in. The more we know and understand the Word of God, the more useful we will be in doing the will of God ... and the more effective we will be in standing against the enemy of our souls.

TRAINING: Using The Sword of the Spirit

Roman soldiers could not be sent into battle without having extensive training in the use of the gladius. They were first trained using shields made of wicker and swords made of wood. These items were typically about twice the weight of the normal swords and shields. The thought was that if the trainee could use these heavier items skillfully, he would be at an advantage when using the real weapons, which were much lighter by comparison.

As Christians, we also must train and be skillful in the use of the sword of the Spirit. The author of Hebrews tells us that we must become gradually more knowledgeable and skilled in the Word of God, until we are able to use it to discern good from evil.

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).

This level of skill—this proficiency with the sword of the Spirit—comes by “reason of use.” We have to be familiar with the Bible ... and we must have our spiritual senses sharpened by it in order to make full use of the weapon God has given us!