

DON'T FORGET THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

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I have been speaking the last couple of weeks about the importance of the Bible in our lives. Since many people tend to avoid the Old Testament ... I've spent time showing how important the Old Testament is to us. It's not really "old"... not out-of-date.

The New Testament Church — whether Jesus or the Apostles and Disciples — used the Old Testament when they preached. Jesus said that Moses and all of the prophets testified of Him. We looked last week at illustrations and types of Jesus in the Books of Moses.

But of course the whole bible is relevant to us and useful. We are more blessed than the early Church because we can read the New Testament Gospels and Epistles as well as the Old. We can benefit from both testaments — Old and New.

But — we do have to read the Bible — ourselves! Just turning up for a Bible Study or Sermon once per week ... is not enough. We each have a personal responsibility. And nobody else can do it for us.

Ephesians 6:10-17

10 **Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

11 **Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles (schemes) of the devil.**

12 **For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Spiritual enemies)**

13 **Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (If we don't have the whole armour on ... we will fall)**

14 Stand therefore, having **girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

15 and **having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

16 above all, **taking the shield of faith** with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

17 And **take the helmet of salvation** **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**;

The **SWORD OF THE SPIRIT IS THE WORD OF GOD** — The Bible.

Spiritual armour is important to us ... a matter of life and death. And a GOOD SWORD is an important piece of armour — for defence and attack.

If we want to use the Sword of the Spirit ... we need to be well-practised in the Word of God.

Not just academic head-knowledge of technical doctrines ... but the INSTRUCTIONS OF LIFE. How to see things God's way ... to have the Mind of Christ. To learn TO LIVE BY THE WORDS OF LIFE.

Analogy of a physical sword. You could "study" it — its dimensions ... type of alloys ... hardness ... history ... value. You could become an expert in the technical merits of the sword. But probably not of much use if you had to go into a life or death battle with it!

It's not just knowing technical details of God's Word — it's whether we're able to use it!

Luke 6:46-49

46 "**But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?**

47 "**Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them,** I will show you whom he is like:

48 "He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock.

49 "But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great."

COME TO JESUS ... check out His Word? Look at the original Greek?? Look at Commentators' views?? The views of COG ministers??

“Experts” in what is says ... but do we do it? Do we practise it?

Luke 8:4-15

4 And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable:

5 "**A sower went out to sow his seed.** And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.

6 "Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture.

7 "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.

8 "But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

9 Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "**What does this parable mean?**"

10 And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that

'Seeing they may not see,

And hearing they may not understand.'

11 "Now the parable is this: **The seed is the word of God.**

12 "**Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.**

13 "But **the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.**

14 "Now **the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.**

15 "**But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.**

Hear? Words! Of Life!

Verse 14: They don't value the Word — it's not a priority!

Verse 15: They hear and keep and are fruitful!

Luke 8:16-18

16 "No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but sets it on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light.

17 "For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.

18 "**Therefore take heed how you hear**. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

"Take heed how you hear". Be careful! Pay attention. Check out — do I believe that? Do I practise that?

Luke 8:19-21

19 Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd.

20 And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

21 But **He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."**

The Disciples — HEAR AND DO!

If we hear and don't do ... then we are not really the close family of Jesus? Not using the Sword of the Spirit?

James 1:19-25

19 So then, **my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;**

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

21 **Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**

22 But **be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but **a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.**

HEAR ... RECEIVE ... DO!

Proverbs 4:20-22

20 **My son, give attention to my words;**

Incline your ear to my sayings.

21 **Do not let them depart from your eyes;**

Keep them in the midst of your heart;

22 **For they are life to those who find them,**

And health to all their flesh.

- Pay attention — make them a priority
- Don't let them depart from your eyes
- Keep them in your heart

It suggests some effort on our part (not just passive) — pay attention — focus — ponder — think through — don't let it “get away” or be suffocated by the world's noise and opinions — thorns and thistles.

Joshua 1:1-3, 7-9

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that **the LORD spoke to Joshua** the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying:

2 "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them--the children of Israel.

3 "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

7 "**Only be strong and very courageous**, that you may **observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you**; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.

8 "**This Book of the Law** (*Law = Torah = Instruction ... Teaching*)

shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. **For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:8 (HCSB)

8 **This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth;**

MEDITATE! Day and night. Don't let it depart from your mouth.

Psalm 1:1-3

1 **Blessed is the man**

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; (the society that we live in)

2 **But his delight is in the law of the LORD,**

And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree

Planted by the rivers of water,

That brings forth its fruit in its season,

Whose leaf also shall not wither;

And whatever he does shall prosper.

Meditate day and night. Meditate = Hebrew: Hagah = "To ponder ... a murmuring or soft speech while in a continual contemplation over something".

Psalm 1:2-3 (MESSAGE)

2-3 **you thrill to God's Word, you chew on Scripture day and night.**

We're bombarded non-stop ... by the secular un-godly world 24/7. We need a lot of help to keep our minds straight.

Paul calls the Word "A Sword" — the Sword of the Spirit. It takes time and effort to learn to use a weapon proficiently.

We can't wait until we are under all-out spiritual attack before we even go looking for our sword. Daily practice ... though for most of us it's too easy to get distracted.

Psalm 119:97

97 **Oh, how I love Your law!** (*Torah = instruction*)

It is my meditation all the day.

Psalm 119:105

105 **Your word is a lamp to my feet**
And a light to my path. *(To illuminate)*

Psalm 119:145-148

145 **I cry out with my whole heart;**

Hear me, O LORD!

I will keep Your statutes.

146 I cry out to You;

Save me, and I will keep Your testimonies.

147 **I rise before the dawning of the morning,**

And cry for help;

I hope in Your word.

148 **My eyes are awake through the night watches,**

That I may meditate on Your word.

Rise before dawn. Awake through the night ... so that I can meditate Your Word.

Even if somewhat poetic (?) ... it shows an attitude ... an understanding of the value and importance.

Hebrews 4:12-13

12 **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.**

13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:12 (AMPLIFIED)

12 For the word of God is **living and active and full of power** [making it operative, energising, and effective]. It is sharper than any two-edged sword,

It sounds like it's an effective weapon.

Or ... is it in the cupboard somewhere ... gathering dust? That's no use!

John 6:53-56

53 Then Jesus said to them, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.**

54 "**Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.**

55 "**For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.**

56 "**He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.**

We will be enacting these scriptures in a few weeks time when we keep The Passover.

John 6:60-68

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?"

61 When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "**Does this offend you?**

62 "What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"

63 "**It is the Spirit which gives life**; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**

64 "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.

65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."

66 From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?"

68 But **Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.**

Jesus' Words are spirit and life and eternal life.

We shouldn't treat God's Words — "Old" or "New" — as unimportant ... dip in now and then IF we're in the mood. Words of Life! Proverbs 4 — "Life to those who find them and health to all their flesh". Which should be a high priority in our lives.

2 Timothy 3:10-17

10 **But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,**

11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra--what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. *(Not just a collection of technical knowledge)*

12 **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

14 **But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of**, knowing from whom you have learned them,

15 and that from childhood you have known **the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**. *(can include deliverance ... safety ... preservation)*

16 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

17 **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

These are the things that we want!

2 Peter 1:1-4

1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 **Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,**

3 **as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him** who called us by glory and virtue,

4 **by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises**, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

God has given us all things.

“Through the knowledge of Him”. All of the great promises come through the knowledge.

Where do we get the knowledge? From regular time spent in the Word ... reading our Bibles.

A LAMP TO OUR FEET. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

It is up to us to put forth the effort.

In a 2016 survey in the USA:

- 11% have read all of the Bible
- 9% have read all of it more than once
- 30% read a few stories or passages) over 50% read
- 13% read a few sentences) virtually
- 10% read none) nothing

REASONS THEY DON'T READ MORE:

- Don't prioritise — 27%
- Don't have the time — 15%
- Have read it enough — 13%
- Disagree with it — 10%
- Don't read books — 9%
- Don't see how it's relevant — 9%
- Intimated by the size of it — 7%
- Don't have one — 6%

The average American spends around 5 hours per day watching TV (about 7 minutes on Bible reading).

The average Brit spends 24 hours per week watching TV (an entire day!)

So — you may be the exception — but nearly all of us can find the time to read our Bibles ... and become much more familiar with them.

Just going to Sabbath Services or Bible Study — WON'T CUT IT!

God gave us a Sword of the Spirit as an important part of our spiritual armour ... for a battle of life and death. It's for our good.

We need to become skilled users and practitioners of the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT!