

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-13 (NASB)

Now Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led *around* ^[a]by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He was hungry. ³ And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” ⁴ And Jesus answered him, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

⁵ And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of ^[b]the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and ^[c]its glory, for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want. ⁷ Therefore if You ^[d]worship before me, it shall all be Yours.” ⁸ Jesus replied to him, “It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’” ⁹ And he brought Him into Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written: ‘He will give His angels orders concerning You, to protect You,’ ¹¹ and, ‘On *their* hands they will lift You up, so that You do not strike Your foot against a stone.’” ¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been stated, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³ And *so* when the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

Sermon Text: Ephesians 6:10-17 (NASB)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against ^[a]flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ ^[b]in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Sermon Title: Weapon of Warfare

Overview

So, just to preface the text a little today, our primary focus is on verse 17, particularly the sword of the Spirit. But this section reminds us of the important context. If we recall, Pastor Dan preached through Ephesians, and in particular, chapter 6:10-20 in the beginning of May. Hopefully it’s still fresh, as it lays a good groundwork for the message today. He elaborated well on the spiritual forces that we battle against, what spiritual warfare looks like, and how the enemy stands against the Holy Spirit and the work of God in our lives, while also expressing why it’s so critical to arm ourselves with the armor of God. So, keeping that in mind, though I’ll

offer a couple of quick refreshers, we'll see what "putting on the sword of the Spirit" as an offensive weapon looks like in the most practical sense.

In our Scripture Reading, Jesus gives us a perfect picture of using the word as an offensive weapon. And though I'll likely expand on the Scripture Reading as much as the actual Sermon Text, I chose Ephesians as the primary text because it forms the basis of the idea of equipping ourselves with the Word, as we'll see in Luke 4 (cf. Matt. 4). Now, the temptations account of Jesus contrasts another familiar account, which we'll also visit, where the schemes of the devil *did* prevail, and because of it, humanity fell. Whereas, in our text in Luke 4, the word of God was used as a weapon against the enemy, and temptation was defeated. And from it, the Savior of the world begins His ministry so that fallen humanity can be redeemed.

Sermon Text

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Introduction

We're told that in ancient Rome, soldiers prepared for battle with long and arduous training. Historians note that some soldiers would run drills with the sword all day, sometimes until they collapsed. They learned to know their armor and weapons well, the function of each piece, and how to be most effective with it in battle. In fact, when it came to training with the sword, they would often practice with a heavier mock version so they would be more efficient at handling the sword in actual combat. When the Ephesians heard Paul's illustration, being familiar with Roman military tactics, they would have known that putting on a sword for battle isn't as simple as picking it up and rushing into combat. But to be equipped meant knowing the weapon well, how to adequately wield the sword, and use it most effectively.

To offer a quick recap on a point that the pastor made, we really face three enemies in the world. Obviously, Satan being the first one, the world, and the flesh. Though as he put it, "Satan being the mastermind, playing the other two like a fiddle." So, we acknowledge that we engage in a spiritual battle against all three, as that which stands in opposition to the Holy Spirit is used by Satan to oppose the work of God in our lives. Thus, the need for us to put on the armor of God—key words, "of God," as we can't do it on our own power. The armor and weapons of warfare are from God's supply, not our own. As we battle the schemes of the devil, we remember that John 10:10 tells us, the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus said in John 8:44, the devil is the father of lies. So, in addition to putting on the defensive armor of God, we combat the

deception of the enemy by taking an offensive stance with God's word of truth, thoroughly knowing what that truth is, and being able to use it against the enemy.

Being Equipped With a Weapon

I like to consider how this looks in a practical sense. And the awesome thing is that, despite the different time and context, Jesus demonstrates what this looks like in action—He literally provides a timeless approach to wielding the Sword of the Word. But before taking a look at how Jesus does it, I like to consider Paul's battle and war metaphor in a contemporary context. If Paul were to use this illustration here and now, he would have alluded to the type of armor and weapons used by the present military. I happen to be a bit of a gun guy myself, so I can't help but think of the training and preparation it takes before going into the field with a firearm. And I'm obviously not in the military or any type of service—as my activity is just going to the shooting range—but there are still certain methods and practices that have to be upheld. Any time I get a new gun, before using it, I read up on it, figure out exactly how it functions. Sometimes I'll watch a YouTube tutorial or review on that model. Before even putting any ammunition in it, I'll learn how to break it down, clean it, and put it back together. And before going out to the range, I get a good handle on all its features so that I'm comfortable using it. I want to make sure that once I'm using it, it becomes second nature. I might even do what's called "dry fire" practice at home, which helps improve your accuracy, helps you to develop muscle memory, and obviously helps you to avoid using it wrong. So, the things I consider the most is first, obviously safety. I don't want to hurt myself and I don't want to hurt someone else. So first, you want to avoid misuse. Second, you want to make sure that it's used effectively.

The same can be said of Scripture. For me to be able to use the word as a weapon, I have to become familiar with it. I want to understand it in context, and know what passages apply to which situations. So, I don't want to simply read but study it. Maybe that means comparing different translations, perhaps using a study Bible, looking at a couple commentaries, memorizing and meditating on Scripture so that it'll really sink in the heart. In this way, I can avoid misuse and recognize misuse. The more I know the word in and out, the more using it as a weapon will become second nature. Using it effectively will come naturally.

Temptations of Jesus

So, looking at Luke 4, and ironically an almost identical account in Matthew 4, We see that first, when Satan tempts Jesus to turn a stone into bread, Jesus responds with, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). He's quoting directly from Deut. 8:3. So, not only does He use an applicable scripture to combat Satan, but even the context of the passage is pertinent. If you visit Deuteronomy 8, you'll see that Moses has them recall the time when they were in the wilderness for forty years, so that God would humble them and test whether or not they'd keep His commandments. He allowed them to hunger, that they may know "that man does not live by bread alone, but lives by every word that comes from the mouth of God." In response to the second temptation, Jesus quotes "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" which is from Deut. 6:16 (Matthew 4:7; Luke 4:8). And finally, when Jesus responds, "For it is written:

‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’ (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:12), he is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20. Jesus isn’t quickly reacting or even throwing out Scripture arbitrarily but utilizing a particular passage that’s pertinent to the lie and temptation that the enemy is using against Him. He’s responding to the devil’s lies with the truth of God. He’s proclaiming God’s word in direct response to the falsehood and deception the enemy is trying to peddle. It’s important to notice that Satan manipulatively uses God’s word against Jesus. He quotes from Psalm 91:11-12 when he says, “for it is written, ‘He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you...’” (Luke 4:10). The rest of that verse in the Psalm, however, finishes, “he will protect you *‘in all your ways.’*” When quoting the Psalm, Satan purposely omits the important phrase, “In all your ways.” One commentator notes, “Because according to the psalmist, a person is protected only when he is following the Lord’s will.” Jesus could have thrown himself off the pinnacle where everyone would see Him miraculously kept safe. They would have immediately accepted Him. But Jesus, knowing that “to receive the acceptance of the people without going to the cross would be to question whether God was really in the plan at all.” It was a matter of trusting the Father’s plan and being obedient to His will. It’s not a coincidence, “that was exactly the situation Moses wrote about in Deut. 6 from which Jesus quoted. Moses referred back to a time when the people wondered if God was really with them (Ex. 17:7).”¹

So, while using the Scripture as a weapon, Jesus is at the same time proclaiming that He trusts that the Father is with Him, and that He remains steadfast in being obedient to the will of the Father. How Jesus responds with the word demonstrates being previously equipped with the truth of God’s word. It demonstrates being able to distinguish God’s truth from falsehood. It shows how to recognize when Satan twists the truth or uses Scripture out of context. Jesus shows us that when we thoroughly know God’s word, we’ll know when and how to use it effectively against the enemy.

A Practical Application

I remember the first time I learned how to use the word in a practical way. I had memorized 1 Corinthians 10:13, and in moments of temptation I would quote it. “There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Now, that of course is the King James Version because that’s the translation I used when I first memorized it. And though it’s been over fifteen years since I was a KJV only guy, I’ll probably *always* quote it that way because that’s how I got used to reciting it. More importantly, I was reminded from that scripture that my temptation wasn’t unique, but every believer shares the struggle of temptation. I could use God’s truth to combat the lie that *this* temptation is too hard to overcome. Knowing God’s truth will help to distinguish the lies of Satan, the world, and the flesh. Sometimes what we hear being told to us, or what we feel in the moment seems true but doesn’t really match up to the truth of God’s word. I need to be constantly reminded of God’s promises and who I truly am in Christ. Because if I don’t, I’ll be susceptible to lies of the enemy. If we recall, even in the beginning of time, the Serpent used

¹ Walvoord and Zuch. New Testament (1984) 214.

the same deceptive tactic in the garden to tempt Eve. Again, he used God's own words and twisted them for his own deceptive purpose.

Eve in the Garden

In Genesis 3, the Serpent says to Eve, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And Eve says, "well yes, we can eat of any tree, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit in the midst of the garden neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (Gen. 3:1-4). The serpent says, "You certainly won't die! God knows on that day you eat it your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God..." So, there's actually a couple things we can notice going on here. One is the plot and deception of the serpent. And the other is Eve's inability to hold on to God's truth. Let's look at what the serpent is accomplishing here. First, he misuses God's word and twists it for his own deceitful purpose, second, he casts doubt on God's character—causing Eve to doubt God's integrity and truthfulness. And finally, he tempts Eve with pride. You can become like God. You don't need to serve God; you can become your own gods.

If we look back on how Eve initially responded to the question of what God commanded, there's a really small but significant aspect in how she replies. She says, "Yes, God said you cannot eat of the fruit *or touch it*, lest you die." But that wasn't what God said. If we look back in chapter 2:17, God said, "but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." He says nothing about not being able to touch it. So, Eve didn't accurately quote God's commandment. As one commentator put it, "She either didn't know God's commandment very well or she didn't want to remember it." It seems, however, like she exaggerated God's command and played right into the serpent's lie that God was being unfair. If Eve knew God's truth, she could have stood on to God's word and threw it back at the serpent. Instead, she misquoted God and ended up believing the lies of the enemy rather than the truth of God's promises.

Parallels

There are actually some interesting parallels in these temptation accounts. And we can really see the difference in the outcome when God's word is accurately known and used as a weapon against the enemy.

When the Serpent tempts Eve versus when Satan tempts Jesus, we see that,

1. *Satan appeals to the desire of the flesh.* In the case of Eve, the Fruit of the tree. Gen. 3:6 says, "the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes." In the case of Jesus, turning stone into bread. Remember Jesus had fasted for forty days! And text explicitly states, "He *hungered*" (Matt. 4:2 emphasis added).
2. *Satan uses God's Word and twists it.* In both cases he quotes God's word and then follows it with a lie. How many of us know, that the best lie—or most effective lie—is one that includes a bit of truth.
3. *Satan appeals to human pride and the temptation of power* (He tells Eve, "You can become like God"; He tells Jesus, "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world and their glory")

However, we obviously see that in one case, the word of God is misused, Eve responds by inaccurately quoting God, she doesn't use God's truth to combat the serpent. And thus, she believes a lie over the truth. And both her and Adam fall—armor less—to the schemes of Satan and the desire of the flesh. On the other hand, we see Jesus recognize that the enemy was misusing God's word. Being prepared and equipped in knowledge of truth, He responds with pertinent Scripture. He's not only on the defensive but now using the word as an offensive weapon. He defeats the schemes of the enemy *and* the temptation of the flesh, and the devil departed him.

Conclusion

Although we bounced around a bit, there are a couple of clear points we get from these accounts. First, as believers, we are all in a spiritual battle. The enemy, in the form of Satan, the world, and our flesh all war against the Spirit and God's work in our lives. Second, the enemy will even use God's word to try and deceive us. And if we aren't familiar with what that truth is, we're susceptible to the deception of the enemy. Finally, God has given us the most powerful weapon to fight the forces of darkness, to combat the lies of the enemy, to battle the works of the flesh.

There's power in the Scripture because God's word is truth and light. And the knowledge of truth always overcomes deception and where there is light, darkness cannot prevail. The only offensive weapon we need to be victorious is right here. And as Hebrews 4:12 says, as the children learned last week, "The word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

References

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, eds. 2 vols. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985.

