

Christian, Take the Sword of the Spirit!

by Tim Conway

This sermon emphasizes the importance of taking up the sword of the Spirit, as mentioned in Ephesians 6:17. The focus is on laying aside every weight and sin that besets us, running the race with endurance. The imperative is to actively put off sin and weights that hinder our spiritual growth, trusting in God's empowerment to overcome besetting sins and live righteously.

Scripture: Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 12:1, Romans 8:13, 1 Corinthians 9:27, James 1:22, 1 John 3:9, Colossians 3:5

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Endurance in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

You can open up your Bibles to Ephesians 6, verse 17. Ephesians 6, last week I dealt with the sword of the Spirit. This week I want to focus on the word take, taking the sword of the Spirit.

And so you can see that, verse 17 of Ephesians chapter 6. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Now emphasis, take, take. There's a verb here.

The Launida lexicon, let me just tell you this word, take. It says this, to receive or accept an object for which the initiative rests with the giver, but the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver. So you recognize what it's saying.

This is actually a word that shows the Spirit of God handing the sword. Basically here's what the picture is. It's the Spirit of God holding this sword to you.

The emphasis of the verb is actually on the focus of attention is on the receiver. It's on you. Basically what this is, is an imperative.

It is an imperative mood. You know what imperative means? It means it's imperative. It means that it's a command.

It means that you are being commanded to take, to receive. The sword is being handed to you and God in this verse is commanding you, Christian, you have an obligation to receive and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That's what's happening here.

The Spirit of God has crafted this two-edged sword. And so you have an obligation and you know we're not talking about swords. We're talking about this book.

Do you recognize that to not give yourself to taking this book in the way that is meant here? It's disobedience to God. God is commanding you to do this. For you to be a believer and not be giving yourself to receiving this book and taking it up the way that it says here is, I mean, that's to go against the imperative of God.

When you, if you're making decisions, you see, if you're a professing believer, you've got to be thinking about being in the Word of God. You've got to be thinking that not only is it good for me to be in that book, not only are there truths in there. Listen, man doesn't live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

God is commanding you to do something for your good. Now, the whole point here is we're in spiritual mortal combat. And you are being told to take this up.

You're being commanded. This is like a commander in the military. That's what Paul is.

This is like a battle hardened warrior is Paul. He's been through the battles. He's taken up the sword.

He's had to fight the battles with the devil. And he's saying to you, look, the Spirit of God has crafted this sword for your hand. You need to take that because that is how you're going to make it through this battle.

That's how you're going to win this battle. This is a commandment. God commands you to take the sword.

That's what Ephesians 6, 17 says. Now, here's the thing. Let's just think about swords.

Do you know the term sword in your New Testament is not used indiscriminately? You know what Jesus said? Jesus said, I did not come to bring peace, but what? A sword. You know what that is? That's a metonym. What's that? It's similar to a metaphor.

But basically what it is, is a word that stands in place. When Jesus says, I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword. What does sword stand for? Metonym is when one word stands for something else.

What is sword? For war. That's what it's standing for. When you talk, listen, what I want you to do is get a feel for the way sword is used in the New Testament.

When you start hearing that you're supposed to take a sword, it ought to resonate with you a certain way. Listen to this. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

Now, you need to see that. Listen, here's the imagery in Revelation. Jesus has a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth.

Well, that's appropriate, right? Because what is the sword of the spirit? The word of God. And the word of God is the word of Christ. They're interchangeable, folks.

Why? Because in times past, God spoke to us many times, various ways, diverse manners through the prophets. But in these last days, he spoke to us by who? By a son. By the son.

You see, what Christ speaks is a sword. Now, listen, wouldn't you think, oh, Jesus speaks words. That's for the life of the world.

And yet, isn't it interesting what Revelation says is to strike down the nations. Wow. But listen to what a sword is for striking down.

That's a very interesting picture, if you really stop and think about it. Or what about this? Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belong to the church. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword.

Wow. First apostle to be murdered. Killed with the sword.

When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, this comes from Acts 16, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. When you start thinking about how sword is used in the New Testament, you can mark this down. The sword is meant to kill.

The sword is meant to strike down nations. The sword is meant to take away peace and bring war. It is a symbol of conflict.

It is a symbol of battle. Hebrews, others suffered mocking and flogging, even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword.

Revelation again, anyone to be taken captive, to captivity he goes. Anyone to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Listen, you know what scripture says? It says one of them, one of Jesus' disciples, it says that he stretched out his hand and his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear.

Now you need to know this, Peter cut off Malchus' ear instead of his head. Why? Because he missed. He meant to kill him.

He meant to take his head off. He wasn't trying to perform an operation on his ear. When you think of swords, you need to think of killing and striking down and doing battle.

That's the imagery. New Testament, listen, New Testament swords are not, you can imagine some high state ceremony here in England where, you know, you've got your British dignitaries and they're wearing a sword on the side. Why? Because it's an emblem of previous ages.

That is not why you're being given a sword. It is, it is, listen, swords in the New Testament are not for digging or shaving or for whittling or chopping wood or mounting above the fireplace. They're meant for one thing, to kill.

And so you need to recognize what's happening with this book. Christian, you're commanded to take a sword, only it's not a sword. You know what it is? It's words from the page of a book that form the thoughts that God has given to us.

They come from his mind. We're to take this word as though it's a sword. And when Paul says to take the sword of the spirit, he's serious, very serious, deadly serious.

This is an instrument that wields deadly force. That's the issue. We're in battle against the devil.

And what, you know what happens if you're given a sword? Listen, if all of a sudden we were put in physical warfare, some enemy was coming upon the land and all of a sudden all the guns were gone and we were somehow whisked back in time to where an enemy was upon us and we had to fight by sword. I'll tell you, the wisest thing you could possibly do would be to get a sense of that sword. Do you remember one of David's mighty men who his hand clung to the sword and he couldn't let go of it? That's what we want to be.

We want to be just like that guy. We want to have, we want it to feel, we want to feel at home with it and we want to practice with it. What would you do if you knew that an enemy was coming and you were going to have to fight as best you could to try to take the victory and kill the enemy with this sword? I hope you wouldn't want to run right out onto the battlefield unprepared.

What you want to do is you want to practice. You want to spend hours and hours and hours and hours practicing and learning how to strike and parry and lunge and slash. I mean, that's what you'd want to do, to stab and to chop.

Why? Because that's what it's going to take to survive. You fight or you die. And so take the sword.

That's the picture here. Take the sword. Now, what I want you to get a feel for is this, that God over and over and over tells us that whether it's Genesis or all the way through Revelation, He's saying to us, Christian, I've designed this sword for your hand.

I want you to get a feel for that. So I want you to open to the front of your Bibles to Genesis 15. Now, I want you to pay very close attention because there's going to be a test at the end.

You see, we're talking about the sword of the Spirit. And I'm going to ask you how these verses come into play. What do they have to say to us about the sword of the Spirit? Genesis chapter 15.

After these things, I'm reading from the English Standard Version. After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. Fear not, Abram, I'm your shield.

Your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me? For I continue childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And Abram said, behold, you've given me no offspring and a member of my household will be my heir.

Behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir. Your very own son shall be your heir.

And he brought him outside and said, look toward heaven and number the stars. If you're able to number them, then he said to him, so shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Now, you see, you can go back to read those six verses out of Genesis chapter 15. I don't know how often you get to Genesis. But you know, you can kind of read it as though it's a story far away, far removed, has very little to do with my life.

You see, if that's the way you handle scripture, then you're not taking it and gripping it in your own hand as a weapon for your own battle to strike down and to kill with. You need to know your sword and your sword

goes all the way from Genesis 1, 1, all the way through the end of Revelation chapter 22. You need to recognize that this is your sword.

So what does this have to do with the sword? OK, God has just said to us these words. He believed the Lord and he counted it to him as righteousness. OK, let's jump to the New Testament.

Jump to the New Testament to Romans chapter four. Romans chapter four, verse 20. I'm just taking the time here because I want you to feel something.

It doesn't matter if you're a 16 year old Christian or if you're a 90 year old Christian. Doesn't matter if you're a child. If you're following the Lord, the same admonition is to all of us, the same imperative.

You need to take this sword and you need to know how to use it. So Romans four, verse 20. Speaking about Abraham, the same Abraham that we read about in Genesis chapter 15.

No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God. But he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was counted to him as righteousness.

Now notice this. This is what I want you to see. But the words it was counted to him were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also.

It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord. Now see, this is what I want you to see. Those words, they can seem, you know, Abraham.

And yet it wasn't written just for his sake. It was written for ours. This is Paul.

All these thousands of years removed from Abraham saying to these Roman Christians, that was spoken way back there. But you need to recognize God has preserved this thing because it fits in your hand. This is something for you to take in your hand.

This is a sword for your own grip. It's been custom made for you. You don't want to miss that reality.

How about this? Have you ever read this? Have you ever read that the author of Hebrews? I know you know this. Do you know what we like to say? We like to say, he will never leave us or forsake us. Don't we like to say that? But do you know where that comes from? That comes from Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5. Basically what's being said there is that we are to keep our life free from the love of money.

Don't love money. Be content with what you have. Why? Because he has said, he will never leave you or forsake you.

Do you know where that was said? In fact, if you have your Bible, it probably is in quotes. Why? Because it comes from somewhere else. Where does it come from? Anybody know where it comes from? It actually comes from several places.

But one of the most pronounced is found in Joshua chapter 1 verse 5. Go back and look at Joshua 1 5. Because we could say, hey wait. Where does the author of Hebrews come off saying that I ought to keep my life free from the love of money and be content with what I have for, you know, you recognize the argument. You feel the weight of it.

Don't get all hung up with money because the Lord is yours and he's never going to leave you. He's always going to be. You have him.

He's yours. He belongs to you. He's given himself to you.

You are his people. He is your God and he's going to take good care of you. He's going to take you to glory.

He's going to marry you off to his son. It's the whole thing is absolutely glorious. You don't have to worry about money.

You can be absolutely content with what you have in this life because you're headed towards riches of imperceivable glory. That's good logic. The problem is that he says, well, because he said, God said he'll never leave you or forsake you.

Okay, here it is. Joshua chapter 1 verse 5. You all see it. No man should be able to stand before you.

This is God speaking to Joshua. All the days of your life, just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

You know what this is saying? Same thing that was being said in Genesis chapter 15. Christian, don't go back and read Joshua and read Genesis as though it's some far removed thing. This is a word for the Jews.

No way. Do you know what? We are the true circumcision. You can, you know what? Have you never read that all the promises in Christ are yes and amen.

Do you know what it's saying to us? The sword fits your hand, Christian. Do you know I can go up and take the sword from Joshua and say, hey, it fits my hand too. It's not like Saul's armor.

David couldn't use Saul's armor. Why? Because it didn't fit him. It wasn't made for him.

It was made for Saul. But you know what this is saying? This is saying God's word doesn't work that way. God's work is not like Saul's armor.

God's word is specifically crafted through all the millennia through which this has been written. It was written for you. It was written for you to take up in your hand.

It's custom made for us. Christian, you need to recognize this or there's this. Listen to this.

Paul talking to the Corinthians says this, all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas. Now, you could just stop right there. I recognize Apollos didn't write scripture, but Paul did and Cephas did.

And he says, they're yours. This is what he's telling the Corinthians. Everything is yours.

It's yours. All the promises in Christ, they're yours. If you're in Christ, they're yours.

It's all yours. That's what he's saying. I mean, basically, the reality is this.

Leviticus is mine. Ecclesiastes is mine. The Song of Solomon is mine.

Genesis 15 is mine. Joshua chapter one is mine. All those promises.

There's no promise that those people had for good that they ever had that was applied to them that you can't say they're mine too. That's what it means when it says all the promises of God find their yes in him. All the promises for good.

That's why I can take a promise that was given to Moses and then given to Joshua. And the author of Hebrews can say, that's your promise too. You can take that.

It fits your hand. That's the sword that you have to take up. Listen to this.

Whatever was written in former days, this is what it says in Romans chapter 15. Whatever was written in former days. What was written in former days? All scripture was written in former days from right now.

I mean, the canon is closed. It's Genesis for revelation. It was written in former days.

This is what it says. You know what it says? It says it was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope. Or listen to this.

It is written in the law of Moses. You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain. Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake.

That's what Paul says. Really? An obscure commandment given in the law of Moses was written for my sake. That's exactly what he says.

You see, don't discount it. Don't dismiss it. You come to Leviticus, you can know this.

That is written for your understanding. That is written to bring comfort to you. And that is written for you to fight with.

That is a sword for you to take into the grasp of your own hand and go to battle with. Or you have this. We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble as some of them did.

So now we have this. The Hebrew children out in the wilderness? No, that's for you too. Listen to what it says.

It says they were destroyed. Yep, destroyed by serpents. You don't want to grumble like they did.

They were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, but they were written for our instruction. That's what scripture says.

On whom the end of the ages has come. Do you see how timeless these truths are? You know, don't look at this book as archaic. It is as fresh.

This is why Jesus 1500 years could be quoting from Deuteronomy in his own battle with the devil. Just as fresh as the day they were spoken. Meant for his hand and meant for your hand.

A sword to be taken. Now, here's the thing. I want you to think for a moment about the temptation of Christ.

Because if anybody was the master at taking this sword and doing battle with the devil with, it's the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to Matthew chapter 4, which is where we see this. I want you to see something about

taking this sword into the grasp of your own hand.

Something that I'm afraid sometimes we can miss when we think about the Word of God and the sword that it is. Matthew 4, I'm going to pick up reading in verse 3. The tempter came and said to him, if you are the son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread. But he answered, it is written.

Okay, there's his hand is to the sword. But I want you to hear what he says. He says, it is written, verse 4. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Now, why did he quote that? I'll tell you why he quoted that. This is what sometimes we don't really grasp in grasping the sword. He is going to quote from Deuteronomy three times.

And do you recognize what every one of these quotes is? He is quoting about what his own responsibility is. He's not just quoting. It's not like the devil's coming along and saying, well, Jesus Christ isn't God.

Oh, I'm going to quote John 1, 1, because yes, it's true. If somebody comes, if the devil comes against us and he's attacking the deity of Christ, we can say before Abraham was, I am. My Lord and my God.

Yes, we can quote those kinds of texts. But do you recognize Jesus is not just trying to win some kind of doctrinal debate with the devil? Do you recognize what he's doing? Or you can go further here. You can look at verse 7. Jesus said to him, again, it is written.

Again, a quote from Deuteronomy. Again, Jesus showing us his aptitude to take this sword to do battle. Listen, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

Do you recognize when he quotes that? He's not saying to the devil, you shall not put the Lord God to the test. He's simply quoting the way it is in Deuteronomy. What he's saying is, I am under the mandate not to do this.

This is why I won't do what you say, devil. Because I, he brings the sword to bear on his own potential sin. You hear what I'm saying? Potential sin.

This is what the devil is trying to get him to do. The devil is trying to get him to sin. And when he brings up the sword, what he's doing is he's putting the sword into potential sin on his own part.

Again, the third time he says, it is written. He says, be gone, Satan. Verse 10, be gone, Satan.

It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve. Again, he's not saying you devil, you need to worship him. That's not what he, that's not the major reason that he's quoting this text.

He's saying you because he's applying it to himself. That he must not go against the will of the father. You need to recognize that the proper way to wield this sword is in this fashion.

Our Lord quotes scripture that puts the sword to the possibility of his own sin. He's quick with the sword when it comes to his own obedience to God. You know what? Sometimes we can get young Christians.

We get young Christians that are quick to want to be able to quote scripture so that they can win the doctrinal argument that might take place. But do you recognize the way he used this sword was to plunge it right into the possibility of sin all three times. That's what he wielded the sword for.

He was constantly flashing this thing at any temptation that would lead him to sin. That is the way we want to become really skilled with this. Undoubtedly the Lord was skilled with this sword in many different subjects, many different topics.

But you want to notice exactly how he used this sword. Listen, swords are for killing. And he put to death the possibility of sin with that sword when he went face to face with the devil.

He defeats the devil by putting the sword into the sin. And this is the key. I want to give you a verse to consider.

Jesus said this, pay attention to what you hear, for with the measure you use, it will be measured to you and still more will be added to you. What in the world is that saying? Listen to it again. Pay attention to what you hear.

And he's talking scripture. Pay attention to what you hear when Christ speaks that sword comes out of his mouth. Pay attention because with the measure, with the size of the measuring cup or the measuring vessel, you'll be treated according to the use you make of your opportunities of hearing.

And if you consider it well and you take it to heart, you make good improvement of what you've heard, you'll be well rewarded. And if not, you'll receive accordingly. That's the issue here.

Take the sword. You want to notice how the Lord quoted from Deuteronomy. It's obvious that when he read Deuteronomy, he paid careful attention, so much attention that he was actually able to use it, not to ward off the devil so much as to keep himself from the possibility of dishonoring his father.

That was the real issue. That's how he paid attention. And if we would know it, if we would know, I mean, look, you've got to study Deuteronomy if you're ever going to be able to quote it in such a way to keep you yourself from sin.

You've got to know how to, listen, you've got to practice with this sword. You've got to dig. You've got to search.

You've got to study. We've got to make that our life. We've got to pay attention.

We've got to get down to the depths of it. We've got to read the whole Bible. And you want to, you know what? You want to go with a big measuring cup.

Why? Because with the measure that you receive, it's going to be ditched out to you back again. I'm go with it. Go with a big measuring cup.

I mean, go to here. Pay attention to what you hear. Because with the measure that you, there's so many people that don't hear.

We need to hear. And then you've got people that read the Bible, but they don't hear. We need to stop and ask the Lord.

We need to pray. We need to read the Bible on our knees. Lord, please show me what I need to see.

Here's what scripture says. The Proverbs themselves say this. When it comes to that which comes out of the mouth of God, listen to it.

If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. But you know what you got? You've got to dig for it like for hidden treasure.

You've got to really go looking for it. This can't, do you recognize? Look, if you're getting ready for a battle and you've been given a sword, I would say don't be lazy. If you know that you've got to go into battle, and that sword is for striking down and killing with, and your survival depends on it.

I would say you would want to spend hours of every day practicing with that sword. If you're basically in the military and that's what your job is. Your job is to survive.

Your job is to basically kill the enemy. You need to know how to use the sword. You're going to practice with it for hours and hours on end.

This is what God's saying to us. Look, casual readers of the Bible don't find its treasures. That's what it says.

Listen to it again. It says if you call out for insight, raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver. How would somebody, somebody that really wants to find silver and gold and precious stones buried in the earth, that takes effort.

It takes a lot of effort. You search for it as for hidden treasure. Then you will understand the fear of the Lord.

Then you will find the knowledge of God. The Lord does give his wisdom. From his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

But I'll tell you this, he doesn't give it cheaply. He expects people to dig for it. He expects people to go after it.

That's how we need to handle this book. You know what, you've got to pay attention. If you really recognize that, hey, there are things from Genesis 15 that were given for me.

There are things from Joshua 1 that are for me. There are things that are given in Deuteronomy chapter 6 and Deuteronomy chapter 8 that are for me, which is where Jesus quoted. You see, if there's something back there, there's something back there that has to do with the muzzling of oxen.

And it's for me. You see, you've got to pay attention. You see, when you come across Scripture and all of a sudden you're reading, they shouldn't sow their fields with two kinds of seed.

You should stop in your tracks. That's for me. What's that saying? And you know what, if you came up with some conclusion that, well, I as a Christian should not be marrying an unbeliever, you might be right on track with what the true spiritual meaning of that is.

But it's for you. These things are for us and we need to go after them. Listen to what it says of Ezra.

He set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it. That is so critical. See, we want to dig like Jesus.

It's obvious Jesus dug into Deuteronomy to know how to live, to know what was right. You understand he came as a man and he learned the word. He learned what the will of his father was and he grew in obedience.

Not that he was ever not obedient, but his obedience was tested at every step by increased levels of resistance and difficulty and sorrow and testing. And he applied the word. That's what was going on in his mind.

Applying the word of God. Now, we got to read. Listen, read, reread and reread.

Read your whole Bible and ask questions. Ask questions all the time. Dig, search, study in order to do what Ezra did.

To do it, to do what you hear. I'll tell you this. There's one place Jesus said that if your will is to do the will of God, then you'll know whether what Jesus says is actually the truth.

That comes from John 7, 17. Do you recognize this? That when you have a will to go with a big measuring cup to the word, God is going to flood you. And one of the ways that you can see that, that you're really receiving is because your life is conforming.

You ought to read to conform. You ought to read to change your life more into a consistency with this word. If you're reading the Bible regularly and your life isn't changing regularly, something is wrong.

You're not going with the right kind of measuring cup. You're not going to learn the law of the Lord to do it like Ezra did. Now, listen, I'm going to finish with this.

Just bear with me here. I want to give you a practical example. Friday, you know that in the Bible study, I emphasized how righteousness will deliver in the day of wrath.

Let's look, a text that I did not have you all go to on Friday. This has everything to do with what we're talking about here, using the sword. But turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 2. I want to show you something.

Romans chapter 2. Sometimes I'm afraid that Romans chapter 2 is often when we think about Judgment Day, it is perhaps not consulted as much as maybe we ought to. And I think sometimes it's because I think Romans chapter 2 can be misunderstood. And I think because by many it is misunderstood, it's not readily resorted to.

But I want to take you to it because I want you to see that the truth that I was trying to set forth on Friday is indeed here. Notice Romans 2 verse 6. God will render to each one according to his works. So this is how it's going to be on Judgment Day.

Now notice this. Here's the Christian to those who by patience and well-doing. You see, my point was this on Judgment Day, righteousness is what's going to deliver because we are going to be judged based on whether we were righteous or not.

That is the issue. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord. And he says, I never knew you.

You were workers of lawlessness. See, they weren't righteous. This is the issue.

Those who by patience and well-doing are seeking for glory and honor and immortality. God will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking, here's the unrighteous.

They do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness. You see it there. This is a righteousness issue.

Those who obey unrighteousness, there's going to be wrath and fury. And then he says it again, only this time he puts forth the unrighteous first. Verse nine, there will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek.

But glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good. So you see it, the same truth I was seeking to bring out. The Jew first and also the Greek for God shows no partiality.

See, there's no partiality. It doesn't matter what we claim to be. It doesn't matter how religious we were.

It doesn't matter how many times you showed up at the church building. It doesn't matter how many times you were baptized or whether you carried around this version or the other of the Bible. It doesn't matter if you read the Puritans.

It doesn't matter if you had the label of Calvinism over your head. The reality is this, that in the end on judgment day, there's going to be no partiality on God's part. He is going to divide and it is going to be the righteous from the unrighteous.

That is exactly what you see here. There's no argument. I mean, if you're arguing, you have to argue with this.

That's what it looks like. And you'll notice it comes down to what we do. It comes down to doing good.

It comes down to whether we obeyed righteousness or unrighteousness, which by the way, the scripture speaks like this everywhere. But there was some hesitation on people's part to talk this way. And I think there often is.

And that's why I think this is really an important truth. Now, listen, brethren, what we're talking about is taking the sword. Now, so afterwards, a sister asked this question relating to the Bible study.

Can I ask about besetting sins? How does that relate to being righteous? And you recognize the question. I'm sure what a person is feeling, what the sister is feeling is, okay, I see what you're saying in the Bible about righteousness. And yet when I look at myself, I've got some besetting sins.

How does this fit with righteousness? In other words, am I okay or am I in trouble? I mean, that's really where the question stems from. What do you do with that? Okay, I think this has everything to do with taking up the sword. When I hear a question like this, I immediately think about the sword.

And I immediately think of taking the sword like Jesus took the sword. Now, when I hear the term besetting sin, what do you think about? What is a besetting sin? Let's just put a basic definition to it. What is a besetting sin? I mean, in the Christian environment, what do we typically think when we hear that? A sin that someone constantly struggles with.

Yeah, a proneness. What sin are you most prone to? That's right. That's the issue.

It's a person. A professing Christian is especially prone to fall into a certain sin or certain sins, plural. That would be what we consider a besetting sin.

Probably most of us think exactly that way. So, okay, we're going to take up the sword, which means we're going to go to the Word of God. And we're going to begin to look for answers.

We want to dig. You see, we want this wisdom. We want to dig.

The first thing I want to know is very practical. Because, listen, if the point of having a sword is I need to learn how to fight with it. I need to learn how to block.

I need to learn how to parrying and I want to stab with a thing. I'll tell you this. If you're not equipped, if you're a soldier and you have to fight with a sword and you're not equipped and you come up against somebody that is, I mean, they're going to disarm you and it's going to be all over for you.

We're in a battle against the devil. We've got to wield this sword. And so we need to know how to do it.

And so the first thing we need to recognize is this. Okay, my Bible has almost 2,000 pages. Okay, we're talking about besetting sin.

I want to take the sword in my hand because everything written in there. You know what? You know what it says? All scripture is God breathed and it says it's profitable and it's profitable for the man and the woman of God and it's profitable to equip us for every good work. It's a sword that's suitable to every one of our hands.

Okay, so 2,000 pages. How am I going to find where it talks about besetting sin? Okay, we need to know how to use the tools that help us to really dig in this book. Now, one of the first things you might do is go to Google, but I'm going to warn you.

If you go to Google and you basically Google, where does the Bible talk about besetting sins? That is not a bad tool, but it will become a bad one if it leads you to never go to your Bible and that is, brethren, I'm going to tell you, we've got to be self-disciplined when it comes to the internet. You know what the internet allows us to do? Be lazy Christians. We basically get on there, type in besetting sins and you know what you're going to find? Fourth down, Ligonier Ministries.

What does R.C. Sproul say about besetting sins? If you're like me, you're half-tempted, bang, you're going to go right there and you know what, you've just become an extremely lazy Christian who is not being Berean because you know what Berean means? It means I don't care if John MacArthur said it, I don't care if R.C. Sproul said it, I don't care if Martin Lloyd-Jones said it, I don't care if Charles Spurgeon said it. To be Berean means I'm going to go see what God says and see if what these guys are saying actually lines up with what God says. But you know, some of the times we don't even get back to taking the sword.

Listen, what John MacArthur says is not the sword. It's only the sword in as much as he gets it directly from this book. So you need to be careful.

If you go use Google, use it to take you to dig in Scripture. You know what happens if you Google, where does the Bible talk about besetting sins? Number one, Hebrews 12.1. It's going to come up as the first link. Okay, don't follow the links on Google.

See that it says Hebrews 12.1 and then open up your Bible because this is the sword and this is what you need to take and this is what you need to know how to use and equip yourselves with. Okay, so let's do that. Let's actually go to Hebrews 12.1. Hebrews 12.1 is where it tells me that it's talking about besetting sin.

But see, unless you're one of the few people out there that actually carts around the King James Bible, guess what's going to happen? You're going to turn to Hebrews 12.1 and what are you going to see? What are you not going to see if you have an ESV or an NAS or a New King James when you go to Hebrews 12.1? What are you not going to see? You're not going to see the word besetting. It's not there. Now listen, first thing we want to do is we want to really grapple with is besetting sin even a scriptural concept? I mean, does the Bible talk about besetting sins? Well, here's the thing.

The King James does use the term. Let's hear it. Let's just read it in the ESV first.

Hebrews 12.1. Therefore, since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely. There it is. But it doesn't say besetting sins.

It says sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. So let me read the King James now. Now here, let me just stop here.

If you're going to use Google, be self-controlled. Let Google only show you where you need to go in Scripture and then go there. Don't follow grace to you.

Don't follow desiring God. Don't follow Ligonier. It is so tempting to do that.

Don't do that. You need to know how to use the sword yourself. That's what you're being told to do.

Take up the sword. Not take up the R.C. Sproul commentary or the John MacArthur study Bible where you depend on what he says all the time. That is not taking up the sword.

That is not being Berean. But here's another thing that you want. You want some kind of tool that helps you cross-reference.

My wife really speaks highly of this blue letter Bible. That allows her to cross-reference. It's got wonderful tools.

She was showing it to me. A lot of the tools I have on my Bible works, which is a high power. You all have access to that.

The blueletterbible.org. Now listen, what you can do there is you can cross-reference. You can bring up a whole number of different translations and you can read the different translations. Here's King James, Hebrews 12 verse 1. Wherefore, seeing we're also compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that's set before us.

Okay, this is the only place in the only translation where the Bible talks about besetting sin. So, basically what does beset mean? You can look that up on the blue letter. You can look at the actual meaning of the word.

And you know what you're going to find? The term beset means to ensnare. Now, the New King James reads this way. The sin which so easily ensnares us.

The New American Standard. The sin which so easily entangles us. Okay, so what about besetting sins and how they relate or ensnaring sins? And how they relate to righteousness? Well, let's lay hold of the sword like our Lord did.

Let's use it as an instrument of death to stab right into the heart of our own sin. You see, what you don't want to do is this. You don't want to say, this is not handling the sword right.

You don't want to say, well, the Bible talks about besetting sin. Therefore, besetting sin is something that Christians struggle with. Therefore, me constantly struggling with these certain things in my life, because the Bible talks about besetting sin, besetting sin must be pretty normative.

Okay, I'm okay. What does it have to say to righteousness? Well, obviously, a Christian can struggle with besetting sin, because the King James Version, at least in Hebrews 12.1, says that besetting sins are a reality. And see, then you justify that you have besetting sins, because after all, the Bible talks about them.

And so you're doing nothing more than what the Bible talks about, right? You want to use the sword like Christ did. He quoted what the Bible actually said about his own obedience to God. Let's actually see what 12.1 says about besetting sins.

Since we are surrounded by all this list of Old Testament saints in Hebrews 11, you see, you don't want to read out of context. If we really want to get a good feeling for this, we want to read all about these saints that live by faith in Hebrews 11. And it says this, because we have all these people who made it, let us lay aside.

Here's what you want to see. Let us lay aside every weight. Let us lay aside.

The sin which death so easily beset and let us run with patience. The race that is set before us. I mean, do you see this? If we're honest about the text and we take the sword into our hands, I mean, I would say this.

Come on, Christians. Let's play the man. Let's play the woman.

Take the sword of the spirit into your hand. And if you do, then I would say this, do what Jesus did. You see what Jesus would have done if he was quoting this is he would not have talked about besetting sin as though somehow that's now.

How does that go with righteousness? Well, you know how besetting sin goes with righteousness. What's right? What's right is to do what Hebrews 12, 1 says. And what is that? What does it say? Lay aside every weight in the sin.

Lay aside every, every translation says that ESV lay aside. KJV lay aside. New KJV lay aside.

New American Standard lay aside. Over and over and over again. Let us lay aside every weight in the sin that so easily besets.

How do besetting sins fit with righteousness? Exactly in the way that it says. The righteous thing to do is to lay them aside. Now, you say what? You just say that to people? Yep.

Why? Well, because that's what scripture says. Listen, handle your sword. What does scripture say about besetting sins or anything that entangles or ensnares? And you know what it's really saying.

Every weight slows you down in the race. Every sin ensnares. The whole point is it's not just like you have this certain category of sin that's a besetting sin.

It's really saying that you need to lay aside all the sin because sin besets. Now, it's true. We may have certain aspects in our life that we're more prone to.

But what does it say about it? Does it say basically how does it match up to righteousness? Well, just this. The righteous thing to do is lay it aside. You say what? Yeah, it says stop it.

It doesn't even say pray about it. It doesn't say fast about it. It doesn't say seek counsel over it.

It says put it away. What's this? The preacher's saying not to pray about it? Listen, you know full well scripture says we're to pray about all things. I highly commend regular fasting in your life.

But you know what happens? We have a lot of Christians. A lot of Christians. It's simply procrastination.

And it's false humility to come along and say, you know, I'm struggling. Do you know what struggling is a lot of times? It's just another word for blatant disobedience. We're not doing what we're being told to do.

Now look, put it away. You say what? I mean, but you are. Listen, if we're going to wield the sword right, that's what it says.

What it's saying is lay it aside. Of course, Christians should pray without ceasing. But far out too often, far too often.

Christians have sin in their life. Look, this is a reality. Because the author, look, the author is acknowledging that there is sin that besets.

But what do we need to do with it? We need to lay it aside. Not just all of a sudden say, oh, we must be okay. No, righteousness is laying it aside.

Because if you get people that have sin in their life and they never lay it aside, guess what? That's habitual. That's problematic. And you know what it says to us when scripture says lay it aside? It means you can.

That's basically what it's saying. Somebody says, well, I'm praying about it. I'm asking God to take it away.

No, that is not what it says to do. Look, you can pray and you can ask God to help you. But what this is saying is you've got to do it.

It doesn't say God's going to do it for you. It says God's going to empower you to do it as you see fit. To do it.

I mean, one of the things you don't see in Hebrews 12, one is you don't see prayer. No, the author of Hebrew, he goes straight to the point. You need to lay it aside.

Do it. There's something violent about this because it's got to do with this sword. I mean, the sword, you remember what Jesus was doing with the sword.

It wasn't that he was over there sticking the devil with it. What he was really doing with the sword is he was plunging it into any suggestion of disobedience on his part. He was actually quoting three times from Deuteronomy about what his own responsibility was before God.

That is how to use this sword well. It is to constantly be able to quote what you ought to be doing in your life and do it just like Ezra did. He did.

He dug. He searched. And what is it? I know the things.

Look, for guys, it can be sexual temptation. But for all of us, it can come down to anger. It can come down to laziness.

It can come down to not really appropriating our time well, mismanagement, being sucked away by the internet. And all of a sudden we wake up. We haven't been in the word of God.

It can be prayerlessness. It can be these different things. Losing our temper with certain people.

It can be envy. It can be jealousy. I know the things.

Look, I'm made of the same stuff you are. But if we're going to be really honest in how we handle this sword, what's it saying? Lay it aside. That means you do inventory.

You look at your life. What is it in your life that you're most apt to? There's something violent about this, and there ought to be. Why? Because we're talking about swords.

And what does swords mean in the New Testament? It's got to do with putting things to death. You really, there needs to be. Brethren, you know this.

There's way too much procrastination in Christian circles. And it's false piety. You know, people can seem very humble.

I know I got these problems over here. And, but you know what? You get people that struggle with the same thing over and over and over and over again. When God is there telling them in His Word, set that aside.

Set that aside. Lay that aside. Put the sword in it.

Lay it aside. Now, I know you're going to declare to me, you don't know how weak I am. I'm too frail.

I'm too faint. I'm too pathetic. I'm too inexperienced.

I'm too newly saved. I'm too sick. I'm in too dark a season.

But the answer is this. I would just ask this. Have you been born again? See, if we're really going to say, how does it fit with righteousness? I would say this.

The way besetting sins fit with righteousness is you being honest about what those things are and you go after them and you lay them aside. Because that's what God tells you to do. And I guarantee you this.

If God tells you to do it, once you start doing it, He's going to give you the power to do it. The problem is too often, we start praying. We bemoan the situation.

And we ask God for help. And then we wait until we feel empowered. Don't do that.

When Jesus says, walk on the water, what you want to do is step out of the boat. And then you'll find the water holds you. It's not until you see the water, all of a sudden doesn't look like water anymore.

But now it looks like concrete. So I can step out on it. No, none of that.

You step out in faith. But that's exactly what you're being told to do. I would just ask this.

Christian, do you have the spirit? If you tell me, yes, I do. Then you know what? There's no excuse. Oh, but I feel like I can't do anything.

True. Without Christ, you can do nothing. But you have Christ.

Isn't that the glory of us being Christians? Listen, the most entrenched sins in your life can be rooted out. Because you've got God empowering you to do it. But you know what he says? He says, you've got to do it.

He doesn't say, I'll do it for you. And sometimes that's our idea about sanctification. No, scripture says, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for God is at work within you.

But you see, it's as we work that we find he empowers us. There's too much procrastination. And so, look, if you're going to handle this sword properly, then we want to deal with it.

We want to take the sword. This is a matter of doing. If your weights and sins are going to be put off, then you need to put them off.

Why? Because they slow you down in the race. You see, this is a race. And what it's saying is, weight may be something that's not necessarily exactly sin.

It's just weight. Sin is sin. And it entangles.

And so you've got weight. You don't want to run with extra weight on. That's not wise.

You don't want to run with combat boots. You could, but it's not wise. And then what sin does is it's like barbed wire that gets tangled up in your legs, or like vines that just, it's a snare to you.

They beset. And listen, we need to face the facts. Because based on a text, what we don't want to do is take Hebrews 12.1 and justify besetting sins.

What we want to do is we want to handle the sword properly. And we want to take Hebrews 12.1. And we want to say, wow, God's telling me to lay it aside. That must mean that He's going to enable me to do it as I try to do it.

Brethren, the reality with handling the sword is we've got to face the facts. We don't want to just read over things and gloss over things. If you don't, here's the thing, based on Hebrews 12.1, if you don't put away the weights and sins that beset, it's not because you can't.

It's because you won't. God never commands us to do anything without enabling us to be able to do it. Now, look, there are things in this life that are extremely difficult and it will take blood and sweat and tears.

In fact, He even talks right after here in Hebrews 12 about you have not yet resisted sin unto blood, basically. Look, I know the battle. Like I say, I'm made of the same stuff, but we need to be honest about this.

God tells you to lay it aside, put it off and trust Him to do His part. I mean, sometimes we say, oh, I'm struggling with that. Do you know what that is? Sometimes that is just pathetic because all it is really is delayed obedience.

Oh, I'm struggling with that. What you really are is you, yeah, you may be grieving over it. You may shed a tear over it.

You may feel frustrated with it. But a lot of times Christians that say, I'm struggling with it, they're not doing what God tells them to do. And it really is blatant disobedience.

They're not doing it. Do you know, I read that John Piper, do you know one of the sabbaticals that he took from preaching was because he recognized he had these besetting sins of anger and self-pity and several others. And he recognized that he had never really dealt with these things like God wanted him to and he was done.

And he said, I'm taking off and I'm going to go deal with these. Do you realize I was preaching a sermon series out of Ephesians four on putting off the old man and putting on the new and how we're just told to do that. Really? Put off the old man, put on the new.

And I was saying to people, you know, look, the whole art of Christian living, it's to know about our responsibility before God and we're told to do this and we need to do this. We, the reality is it's useless to say that I don't have the strength because we have it. We have the spirit of God.

It's useless to say, oh, but I want power. But brethren, the reality is we have it. We're no longer, you have to recognize we're no longer these beggars and these slaves who just basically grovel at the feet of sin and lick it up like some animal.

We're no longer in this place where our sin's on top of us and it's bearing down on us and it's got us. We're on top of it now. That is the thing.

Sin will no longer have dominion over you. That is the picture of Scripture. And I was preaching down in Mexico and on these very verses out of Ephesians chapter four, just about laying aside, putting off, just doing what God says.

And I was emphasizing how so often when we get with these besetting sins of these things that we just perpetually struggle with over and over and over, it's just because we're not facing the facts. We're not facing the sin and we're not doing what God says. And you know what? There was a guy sitting there in the audience.

He was actually in ministry. He'd been struggling with sexual sin for a long time. And he said, that's it, just like Piper.

And you know what he did? He went and he confessed to his wife first, then to his family, then to the elders of the church. And you know what he was doing? He was grabbing the bull by the horn. He's like, this is it.

I'm going to do that. I'm going after this. And you know, the whole art of living this Christian life is we need to talk to ourselves and we need to preach to ourselves.

And we need to speak to the devil like our Lord Jesus Christ did. You need to grip the sword. You need to face your sins.

Have you ever really confronted your sins? Have you ever really looked him in the face and say, you have been besetting me, but no more, no more. No more pathetic. Oh, I struggle with that.

No, no, no, no, no. We need to take, we need to do what Scripture says. You want to handle the sword? Handle it this way.

See, this is what Jesus was doing. He was specifically handling this thing to govern the way that he lived. This is what it has to do with righteousness.

Now, look, it'll be a bloody battle all the way to the end by the spirit we put to death the deeds of the body. But you know what? We've got the spirit. So by the spirit, we can put to death the deeds of the body.

And it's only people that put to death the deeds of the body by the spirit that live. That's what Romans 8.13 says. And so, what is it? You know what it is.

You know what your issues are. I know what mine are. You know what yours are.

You know the things that most tend to plague you. Brethren, all I'm saying now is let's use the sword. Let's take it up and really use it.

This isn't just about defending the deity of Christ. This isn't just about defending, you know, the doctrine of justification. It is all those things.

And we will need this sword to defend ourselves against error in those places. But if you notice the way Jesus uses it, he specifically uses it to govern his... He's able to quote it when it has to do with the way he is supposed to live. He is supposed to walk.

He is supposed to live his life in the sight of his father. That's what he used the sword to govern. He used the sword to kill sin.

That's the way you're really going to kill the temptations of the devil is when you use that sword to kill your... And I'm telling you, listen, with the measure that you receive, it will be measured back to you. You need to hear what this book says and you need to seek to apply it and do it just like Ezra did. Don't pray.

Don't argue. You need no special guidance. Oh, it's amazing how often through the years I've seen you get these young people, these young bucks that come into the church.

Well, I need you to mentor me. Look, I'm not going to downplay the place of prayer or fasting or good teaching or accountability or any of that. But I'll tell you this, the primary thing you need is not mentoring.

It's not an accountability partner. The primary thing you need to do is what Scripture says. That's handling the sword.

And so often we try to fool ourselves. We won't pick up the sword. But I need a mentor.

Please pray for me. I'm struggling in this area. And look, I'm not saying we shouldn't be praying for one another.

You know exactly what I'm saying. I'm saying what we need to do is we need to lay aside the very thing that Scripture is talking about here. This is how this fits.

We want to, you know what? We just, we want to put it off. Stop it. That's what it says.

That's basically it. And you know, sometimes that's, what? Is that it? Is that it? There's no long counseling. No, often that's not.

Yes, there can be a place to flash scriptural light on things. But you know what Scripture says? Stop it. Really? Yeah, if you're a Christian, really.

Stop it. Stop complaining. Stop watching that stuff on the internet.

Stop lusting after women. Just stop. Stop wasting time.

Stop procrastinating. Stop overeating. Stop being lazy.

Stop neglecting the Word of God. Stop your prayerlessness. Just stop it.

Stop stealing your employer's time. Stop being just a crummy employee. I mean, stop it.

Stop sacrificing your children to things of the world and to money. Just stop it. Stop that unreasonable fear.

Stop that anxiety. Put it to death. Put to death the deeds of the body.

That's what Scripture says. Pummel your body. Give it a black eye.

That's what Paul said in 1 Corinthians. You have power. Just take the step.

And what it says is God will empower you. This is how besetting sins lines up with righteousness. Righteousness.

It's going to be... Look, there's never going to be full victory in this life. We recognize it. But that doesn't mean you can't be far more holy than you are right now.

And we should be pursuing it. We should pursue it all out. So God, give us the holy violence to do it.

Lord, we pray that you'd help us practically to know how to take up the sword of the Spirit. To wield it. To use it.

To fight with it. To kill our own sins. May it be a weapon of destruction to our ungodliness.

Lord, I pray that you'd help us. I pray that you'd give the brethren determination to all. Lord, I pray for everybody within the sound of my voice right now.

Give us, every one of us, just a renewed determination. Looking to you. Looking to Christ.

Looking to the cross. But we recognize. He hung on that tree that we might die to sin.

There is power there. There is power and look to that cross. There is healing power.

Lord, I pray that it would be unleashed through the Word of God. I pray that you would help the brethren to study. To dig.

To so arm themselves that they're prepared for the fight. They're prepared to put the sin to death. I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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