

Eph 6:17 The Sword of the Spirit

The action word here is dechomai “take,”. Instead of just “put on” like with the breastplate or the boots, there is action here. The word for sword is machaira which could be as long as 19 inches, but it was often shorter, resembling a dagger, therefore it was usually used in close combat. The machaira was a cut and thrust weapon for close in combat.

The Sword not the sword--It’s important to note that this is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. In a world where the sword was the primary defense against getting taken advantage of, or robbed, it would be easy to forget that Jesus is not talking about physical swords here. Well, what happens when you try to fight a spiritual battle with physical means? An illustration from the life of Peter is useful. At the Supper, Jesus warned the disciples that since he was going to the cross, he would not be around to protect them in the same way physically that he was now (see Luke 22:35-38), telling them to be physically prepared for all of the various circumstances of life. God will guide us, but we have to be willing to get about trying to do the Father’s business (see Gen 24:12-27 **27 And he said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned His kindness and His trustworthiness toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.”** So, we see that God expects us to prepare with all of our effort in serving Him, but at the end of the day to depend on His guidance. The swords Jesus was saying that the disciples needed were physical swords, yes, because the world is a dangerous place, and just the sight of the swords was going to deter a lot of problems for them. But, Jesus wasn’t telling them that they were going to be fighting with them, otherwise the two swords among 11 disciples would not have been enough. Jesus is teaching them, and specifically Peter, a lesson here—and the same lesson as Eleazar—prepare as if it all depends on you, and operate in the ministry that God has given you in Faith, because it all depends on God. Jesus is going to use these swords to teach the disciples this lesson. We know this, because the context of Jesus’ words at the Last Supper are the previous verses in Luke; 22:31-33 **31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to sift you men like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith will not fail; and you, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”** Peter’s tendency was to try to be large and in charge, and to bulldoze his way through problems, flying by the seat of his pants, in his own strength. And, Satan was going to try to use this tendency to mess up God’s plan for salvation. Later that night, at the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, like the others, was going to fail because he hadn’t prepared spiritually. Jesus said in Luke 22:45 **45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you do not come into temptation.”** But, they just slept, and didn’t prepare for the trial that was about to come upon them, and Peter failed bigger than all the rest, because he tried to depend on his own strength. **9 When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” 50 And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. 51 But Jesus responded and said, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.** Another gospel tells us that Peter was the one who cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Peter was trying to fight a physical battle, but Jesus had told him who his real adversary was—Satan, who was sifting him like wheat. His failure began when he didn’t prepare spiritually, and continued when he tried to use physical means to fight a Spiritual battle. and Jesus had used the swords mentioned at the Last Supper to teach them all a lesson about the need to prepare spiritually as well, and about what constitutes winning. James 1:22-25 puts it like this: **22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not just hearers who deceive themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who has looked intently at the perfect law, the law of freedom, and has continued in it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an active doer, this person will be blessed in [y]what he does.** Anyone who just lets the word of God go in one ear and out the other without applying it to their

lives will default back to the fleshly, natural way of doing things, forgetting the lessons that they have learned from the Word of God. We have to devote ourselves to Jesus and His teachings, and the rest of the Word of God, allowing them to change us from the inside out, if we are to be victorious spiritually, and not default back to the flesh.

Of the Spirit--This sword is further described as the sword "of the Spirit." The sword of the Spirit is not the Spirit itself but the word of God. It has the idea of offensive empowerment by the Holy Spirit necessary in a spiritual battle Eph 6:12 **For our struggle is not against 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.** So, the sword of the Spirit, the Word is held in the girdle or belt (balteus) of truth, and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. For the Christian, this "sword" originates with the Spirit of God. We are told that our "**sword**" was given through ". . . holy men of God . . . as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). The psalmist, David, declared, "**The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue**" (2 Sam. 23:2). Not only does this phrase "sword of the Spirit" signify that the "sword" finds its origin in the Spirit, but also that the "sword" is the instrument that the Spirit uses. This means that the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God (i.e., "the sword") to bring about cleansing, blessing and spiritual growth in the child of God.

which is the word of God.--The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, the Bible, the place where God speaks to us, uniquely, authoritatively, and decisively. As Paul reminded Timothy, "**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work**" (2 Tim. 3:16–17). To stand firm in the Christian life, we need to know, understand, and apply God's Word to our lives.

Swordsmanship Instruction--We are not left to speculate about the identity of the sword – it is "the word of God". The term "word" here is not the Greek word, logos, a term referring to a broad or general word. The Greek word used here is hrema, which refers to a specific statement or utterance. The "sword of the Spirit" refers to the specific statements of God. It is not enough to say "I believe the Bible" when we encounter Satan in spiritual combat. We need to know the specific principles of Scripture to deal with the specific temptations of Satan.

As always, Jesus gives our example of how we are to handle the "sword of the Spirit" in specific temptations is found in Matthew 4:1-11. There we are shown how our Lord dealt with Satan's attack of temptation. In each of the three temptations, Jesus quoted a specific Scripture from the book of Deuteronomy related to the temptation. He didn't flail His sword around indiscriminately. He used it in a precise way dealing with exactly the temptation that Satan shot at Him. He had been fasting for forty days and forty nights, personally reenacting Israel's wilderness wanderings. But, He had also been praying for 40 days. He was physically weak, but spiritually strong. During that fast, the devil came to Jesus three times and presented him with three different temptations, each mirroring one of the temptations that Israel faced—and failed—in the wilderness. . First, Satan said to Jesus, "**If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread**" (Matt. 4:3), mirroring Israel's complaining over their lack of food. In reply to the devil's first temptation, Jesus quotes Deut 8:3, stating, "**man shall not live by bread alone but by every word [ῥῆμα] that proceeds out of the mouth of God**" (Matt 4:4). This is not preaching the gospel but speaking God's word against his foes. These situations presented three powerful temptations for Jesus to achieve good ends by the wrong means. There is nothing wrong with wanting food to eat or desiring divine protection, and Jesus had come into the world to rule the nations. But the significant point to notice is how Jesus answered these temptations. Each time he got out his sword. Three times he quoted the Bible to the devil. Turn these stones into bread? The Bible says, "Man does not live by bread alone" (Deut. 8:3). Throw myself down from the temple? The Bible says, "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test" (Deut. 6:16). Worship you? The Bible says, "It is the LORD your God you shall fear" (Deut. 6:13). Stab, stab, stab! And

after that, we are told, the devil left him for a season (Matt. 4:11). There is the sword of the Spirit at work, effectively countering temptation.

Sword Drills

First, get into God's Word daily. Find resources that assist you to see how the Bible directs your steps, how it addresses you in your struggles, how it confronts your pet sins, and how it points you back repeatedly to Christ and the gospel. Put it to work in the little challenges so that when great challenges come, you know how it works.

Second, remember whose sword it is. The Spirit is the ultimate author of God's Word and the One who can help us to understand and apply it properly. Before you start to read the Bible, pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher, to help you to understand what you are reading and to see how it affects your life.

Third, learn from others and share what you are learning with someone else. That's the beauty of Bible studies and community groups—we learn together from God's Word. Such gatherings encourage us to become more filled with the good news of the gospel. The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone but in community.