

Sermon Notes: *Our Mighty Weapon* (Ephesians 6:17)

Intro: God has called his church to engage in an unceasing holy war, not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers of darkness. What strengthens our spirits with firm resolve? Confidence in the armor our Savior prepared for us. Jesus Christ is the divine warrior who is mighty in battle (Isa 11). He came into our world clothed in our flesh. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him. And by his atoning death for sins and victorious resurrection from the dead, he has forged the strongest armor that we can possibly have. Jesus prevailed against the forces of darkness in this armor. He has proven its superiority in spiritual warfare. We must put on the armor of God which Jesus forged for us. Doing so makes us strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. How?

#1: Empowered by Christ's life (10, 11). Paul says resolutely "take" the sword of the Spirit. Not only because we are *opposed* by an evil powerful spiritual enemy but also because we are *outfitted* by Christ's empowering life. On the one hand we may expect a fierce fight. On the other we may be confident that we fight in the power of Christ's resurrection life. Boot-camp is meant to instill new military recruits in a deep sense of their new identity. They have said goodbye to their old civilian life, they must now embrace their new life as a soldier. How much more must the Christian live according to his new God-given identity in Christ! We are a new creation in Christ. Paul commands "be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might." This means God gives actual strength for spiritual battle. But God does not dispense his power like spiritual vitamin pills! Instead he enables us live in the power of Christ's life *in us*. Trace Paul's thought from chapter 1. There he prayed God would enlighten the eyes of our hearts so that we might see what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe." This power God "worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places." But then Paul said in chapter 2 God "made us alive together with Christ...even when we were dead in our trespasses (5)... "and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (6). This means that the Spirit of God has applied Christ's death and resurrection to us. God has put an end to the old sin dominated lives we lived before we believed. The power of Christ's resurrection is now at work in us causing us to live differently because we are in truth different at the center of our being or inmost being. We have experienced the truth of Jesus' statement: "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). Life for us is no longer found in bowing to temptation and following Satan's schemes. We live in the newness of Christ's resurrection. Putting on the full armor of God is another way of saying live out who you are now in Christ just as Paul commanded us in chapter 4 "to put off the old self which belongs to our former manner of life and put on the new self created after the likeness God in true righteousness and holiness" (4:22-24). We have new authority in Christ. At the end of chapter 1, Paul said God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body (1:22-23). But in chapter 2, he said that believers are spiritually seated with him in heaven and thus have rule with him over the authorities and powers of Satan (7). Once we were dead but now alive. Once we followed the prince of darkness now we reign with the King of light. Once we were aliens now we are children of God. Can Paul be more plain? Whereas the old nature could not resist the devil's schemes and the lusts of the flesh, the new nature lives in the power of Christ's resurrection. Do we accept this about ourselves by faith?

#2: Empowered by God's Spirit (17). The sword is not merely a defensive piece of armor but

an offensive weapon. The sword referred to is the *machaira* or short two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12) which was used in close combat. Being doubled-edged it was effective for piercing and cutting. Being forged of iron, it was strong and powerful. Take up the sword Christ has put in our hands. The powerful sword of God's Spirit. More powerful than a nuclear arsenal! God gave Christ as head over all to the church (1:22) now it's said that God has given the omnipotent Spirit to the church! We have the Spirit as renewer and sanctifier working in us to will and do God's pleasure and transforming us into Christ. The piercing sword of God's Word. God's Spirit produces change. God's Word is the instrument the Spirit uses. Paul uses the Greek term *rhema* thus connecting the Spirit of God with the Word of God. *Rhema* often signifies the Word God speaks (ex. Mt 4:4). This underscores the "God-breathed" power of Scripture (2 Tim 3:16). The written word of God is the living breath of God. Nothing is more piercing and penetrating. This word when joined to faith as the gift of God's Spirit is the means of our deliverance strengthening us against temptation with Christ's empowering life.

#3: Empowered by our faith. Know God's promises but pray to believe them! Faith is God's gift (2:8). Tempted to fear? Isa 41:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Rom. 8:32; Psa 32:8; Phil 4:10; Rom 8:32; Jn 14:7