

Armed with the Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17-b

Halifax: 14 December 2008

Introduction:

For quite a few weeks now, we have been looking at the battle we wage as followers of Jesus Christ.

- We were born into a world that is in rebellion against our Maker, the only true God, the Self-existing One by whom and for whom all things were made.
 - Satan brought us into this rebellion...
 - But God sent His Only Son to establish a kingdom of righteousness.
 - This kingdom of righteousness is in complete opposition to the rebellion...
 - it is a rebellion against the rebellion.
- And for this cause, there is enmity in the world between those who are in Christ's kingdom and those who remain in their native rebellion.
 - The result is warfare!
 - Jesus told us that if we follow Him, we will be hated by the world.
 - He told us that we would be persecuted and would have to endure much tribulation.
 - The world and its prince, Satan, is doing all they can to oppose us—to bring us back into rebellion...
 - At the same time, we are going forth in God's name, as Jesus has commanded us, calling the world to be reconciled to God.

And because this battle rages on for us as long as we are in this world,

- the Lord calls us to wear the armour that He has provided for us that we may be able to stand in His strength...
 - There are six pieces of armour that are mentioned...
 - So far we have looked at:
 - the belt of truth—which speaks of our sincerity...
 - the breastplate of righteousness which speaks of our righteous conduct...
 - the shoes of the gospel of peace which speaks of the good news that we have peace with God...
 - the shield of faith which speaks of our trust in God and His promises...
 - and the helmet of salvation which speaks of our hope...
 - Today we come to the sixth and final piece of armour...
 - The sword of the Spirit.

This piece of equipment is a little different than the others because it is the only one that is a weapon... the others are only defensive, but this one is also offensive.

- Not only do you use a sword to block the blows of the enemies' swords, but also to cut the enemy down and to thrust Him through.
- Just as Israel was called not only to guard themselves lest they be drawn into rebellion,
 - but also to go forth conquering the Lord's enemies...
- so also are we called to go forth into the world for Jesus Christ with this sword to conquer our enemies—
 - If we do not do this, we will be overcome by our enemies, even if we have the rest of our armour on...
 - The Lord warned Israel that if they did not destroy the Canaanites with His sword of judgement,
 - they would surely be ensnared by them and would embrace their practices and their idolatry.
- We are not merely to huddle off in our own corner as Christians,
 - but we are to go forth conquering for Jesus Christ with the Sword that He puts in our hands!

I. What is this Sword of the Spirit?

- Well, we are told, aren't we...right in our text...
 - It is "the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."
- A. Now there are two ways we may think of the Word of God...
 - There are two ways that it is used in scripture.
 1. First, Jesus is called the Word of God—
 - John introduces Him to us in this way in His gospel.
 - He tells us that the Word was in the beginning with the Father,
 - that He is God,
 - that all things were created by Him,
 - and that now He has become flesh and has dwelt among us.
 - He is called "The Word" because He is the One who, from all eternity, reveals God to us...
 - He is the Face of God,
 - the Messenger or Angel of God,

- the Truth of God,
- the Apostle of God,
- the Prophet of God,
- the Priest of God,
- the King who sets up the government of God...
- He is the one who condescends to show us what God is like and to bring God to dwell among us.
 - So you see that Jesus is the Word of God incarnate...

TRANS> Now of course it is not the person of Jesus that we take with us as a sword.

- We cannot brandish Him as a weapon...
 - He is not a weapon that we use, but the Lord that we serve...
- No, when our text speaks about the word of God, it speaks of it in the second way that we find it used in scripture.

2. The oracles or pronouncements of God are called the Word of God...

- This is the word of God written or spoken.
 - a. God was pleased to create us with the ability to know Him.
 - And so He gave us language in order that by words He might reveal Himself to us.
 - From the very beginning,
 - He spoke to us, giving us instructions and telling us about Himself and how He is to be worshipped.
 - b. And through the ages, He has continued to reveal Himself to us with words...
 - And now, ever since the coming of Christ,
 - who is His final revelation to us in this world,
 - He has been pleased to put His revelation in writing for us in the Holy Scriptures which are called the Word of God.
 - This Word of God written gives us the complete revelation of all that we need to know about God—
 - There are some who despise this method—
 - They say that they want something more spiritual and personalised...
 - It is obvious that such persons have never really had the Word come to them with conviction and power.
 - When it does,

- the Word brings us into full contact with the Lord— with all that He wants us to know about Himself and about His will for us.
 - It completely furnishes us with what we are to believe about Him and what duty He requires of us.
- c. And because we are fallen creatures,
- It presents to us in particular our sin and need of salvation and the way of salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - The message is a message tailored for sinners—
 - designed to meet us in our fallen, darkened condition with the good news of Jesus Christ.
 - It is designed to the light of truth into this world of darkness, falsehood and confusion.

TRANS> And now I want you to consider:

B. Why is it called *The Sword of the Spirit*?

1. First, it is called a sword because it is a powerful weapon...
 - a. As fallen sinners, we are enveloped in darkness...
 - God tells us that the whole world lies in darkness...
 - He says that Satan has blinded the minds of those who do not believe...
 - He says that men suppress the truth in unrighteousness—they hold it down so that it will not bother them,
 - They do not like to think about the true God against whom they have rebelled and under whose judgement they are fallen.
 - b. But the Word of God breaks into this darkness—powerfully and wonderfully.
 - 1) In Hebrews 4 we are told this about the word...
 - Heb 4:12-13: For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.
 - This idea here of the word piecing to the division of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow is that the word goes to the very depths of us.
 - The light that we were repressing breaks into our lives when the Word of God pierces us like this...
 - It comes right into us and lights everything up!

- 2) Essentially what this involves is this:
- The word comes to us and it reveals God to us...
 - It brings Him into the focus as He is.

TRANS> And so you see that the Word of God is like a sword that pierces us with the light...

2. And it is called the sword *of the Spirit*...for two reasons...
- a. First, because it is the Spirit who gives us the Word—
- In 2 Peter 1:21, we are told that the men who wrote the Scripture were carried along by the Holy Spirit...
 - They were borne along by Him so that what they wrote was not their own ideas, but the pure word of God.
 - It is given by the Spirit...
- b. Second, it is the Spirit's sword because the Spirit is the one who empowers the sword so that it accomplishes God's purposes...
- In 2 Cor 2-3, Paul speaks about the power of the Word of God when God's Spirit is present in the ministration of it...
 - In 2 Cor 2:14-17, He shows that the Word of God always accomplishes its purpose by the power of the Spirit...
 - He says,
 - 2 Cor 2:14-17: Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.
 - The idea here is that when the Word of God is spoken it always finds fulfillment,
 - The judgment that it pronounces on those who reject Christ will most certainly fall upon them...
 - And the salvation that it pronounces on those who believe will certainly come to them...
 - Even if those who hear do not receive the Word,
 - Still, it brings the truth of God to bear upon them.
 - It puts everything into its true perspective!

II. Now my brothers and sisters, this is exactly the sort of weapon we need as we war against the forces of wickedness as Christians!

- You know how you get all muddled up about things...
 - The truth is not clear to you...

A. This is the way you were when the word first came to you...

1. You were in the darkness...

- In your corruption, God's law was not clear to you—
 - the difference between what was right and what was wrong was blurred...
- You were not so clear that you are a sinner in need of salvation—
 - that you are surely under the judgement of God for your wickedness...
- You were not clear about who God really is—
 - By your suppression of the truth, you may not have even been sure if there is a God at all...
 - but certainly you were not clear about his character and nature...
 - about his holiness and power,
 - about his goodness and severity.
- You had your own distorted understanding of God.
- Nor did you have any clear understanding of the way of salvation—
 - of what it means for Christ to die on the cross as a sacrifice to take away your sins and how He bore the curse of God for you!
 - Until the word came, you had no way of even imagining that God would ever do such a thing!
 - And once you understand it, it is astounding that ever did!

TRANS> Everything was all muddled up.

2. But then God's word came to you and broke into your darkness.

- He caused the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to shine in your heart...
- And then everything changed!
 - Now you could see clearly what God expects of you...
 - Now you could see clearly that you had sinned and come short of the glory of God...
 - And you could see that you were condemned because of it...
 - The Word of God laid you bare and you came trembling before Him!

- And not only that,
 - but you also could see what Jesus did—
 - how He is the Lamb of God who laid down His life as a sacrifice to take away the sins of His people...
 - and that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life...
 - The Word of God brought comfort to you...
 - Now you could see how sufficient the work of Christ is to redeem and under the influence of this light and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, you repented and turned to Him for salvation.

TRANS> If you are believer today, it is in part because the Word of God pierced you and brought the truth of God to bear upon you...

- The Sword of the Spirit pierced you so that you who were once darkness became light in the Lord.
 - What was muddled before became clear through the scriptures...

B. And now that you know Christ, you need this same sword as you go on for the Lord in a world that opposes you!

1. You have powerful enemies...
 - a. Your own lusts come to war against your soul...
 - b. The world comes to persecute you or to entice you—to draw you into sin...
 - c. And there are even false teachers who come into the church to lead you away from God...
2. And because of the influence of these enemies, you get all muddled up until you take out your sword and use it!
 - a. What happens when you lusts begin to inflame?
 - You get all muddled up, don't you?
 - Sin starts to look attractive to you (and of course there are pleasures in sin for a season)...
 - You start to see those pleasures and to be enticed...
 - How nice it would be to satisfy that appetite...
 - to fill yourself with that wine...
 - to have some more of that food when your belly is already filled...
 - to indulge in a little lust for that woman...

- or to take that break when you are supposed to be at work...
 - or to tell that lie to cover your tracks...
 - or to respond with that snarky comment that has come up to your tongue.
- You start to make all sorts of justifications and excuses for why it would be a good thing satisfy the lust... whatever it is—and you are drawn away by it...
 - This is when you need to take out the sword of the Spirit and use it!
 - The Word of God is so simple and clear...
 - “Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit...”
 - “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”
 - “He that looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”
 - “Do your work heartily as unto the Lord.”
 - “Speak every man the truth to his neighbour”
 - “Do not return evil for evil...”
 - Lust makes all these things confusing and unclear, but the Word cuts in.
 - You see that it is not rocket science!
 - It is not deep or esoteric...
 - God’s word comes and breaks into all the confusion that lust brings and makes things clear!
 - When you realise that it is **His** Word, it breaks in with light and power and subdues your lusts.
 - It brings God’s perspective into the situation.

TRANS> Having seen how the sword is used against our lusts, let us not consider how it is to be used against the world...

- b. How do you use this sword against the world... against the spirit of the age.
- 1) The spirit of the age often serves to make us muddled...
- Every age and every society has different falsehoods that are embraced to resist God...
 - These are their strong-holds and fortresses that make them feel secure...
 - There are certain ways of thinking that distort the truth so that they do not have face the living God—

- or at least so they can put off facing Him as He is!
- Such falsehood is so powerful that intelligent adults can actually agree that crushing baby's in their mother's womb is acceptable...
 - or that the world was formed by random processes!
 - Such things gain credence by popular approval and they become deeply engrained over time...
- a) To make it all the worse, teachers come forth in the church who, rather than submitting to the pure Word of God,
 - begin to modify what they teach to agree with the sentiments and reasonings of the present age...
 - Sometimes, these departures from the truth are so significant that the gospel is entirely lost...
 - Inasmuch as we embrace the spirit of the age, we are muddled about God's truth.
- b) Let me give you some examples of what I am talking about...
 - (i) One of the things this present age opposes more than any other is a God who judges sinners...
 - To dodge this, the world has imagined a God that is pathetically indifferent about sin...
 - He doesn't like for us to hurt each other and He tells us not to do it,
 - but He has no concern about the fact that we do not give thanks to Him as our Maker...
 - and that we, though made in His image, constantly misrepresent Him in the world.
 - He is not a holy God at all.
 - He can accept us just the way we are, and He would never be angry with us—hurt maybe, but never angry—
 - and of course He would never judge anyone.
 - Well Christian, you constantly meet people who think this way... you meet them both inside and outside the church!
 - You need to take out the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God...
 - And the Word says plainly that God is angry with the wicked everyday...

- and that He is a Holy God who cannot be approached by sinners unless they are sanctified by the blood of the covenant.
- The Word tells us that there will be a judgement at the last day and that those who are outside of Christ will be cast into the Lake of Fire because of their sins.
- And once we have seen and accepted what the Word of God says about this, the confusion is cleared up...
 - Then we are ready to see the holiness of God as we have never seen it before—and to worship Him...
 - And seeing that, we are ready to see the love of Christ in coming to bear for us the curse—
 - And when we see this, how it makes us begin to hate sin and to yearn for holiness and for deliverance from all our corruption...
- The sword of the Lord is so powerful—
 - it silences the world’s sentimental cry for a God that does not hate sin and punish sinners...
 - It brings His precious truth—
 - truth that makes us confident against the lies of the world...
 - It brings the truth of God upon your enemies and renders them helpless.

TRANS> That is an example of the word confronting worldly sentiment...

- (ii) The Sword of the Lord works the same way when you use it to confront the world’s false reasoning...
 - Take the example of the sovereignty of God...
 - The idea that God works all things after the counsel of His will, and that we are at the same time fully responsible for all that we do.
 - This is a doctrine that the world cannot accept because it does not make sense to them...
 - But if we consult the word, it is very plainly what the scriptures teach...
 - whether we understand it or not, it is true.

- Then there is the reasoning of the world that rejects that God is on God in three persons—
 - or that He created the world in six days—
 - or that He deals with us federally so that in Adam all die, but that all who are in Christ are made alive.
- If you come to the pure word—if you take up the sword—
 - all is clear, all is light, all is truth...
 - And I should add that once you receive the truth,
 - it all begins to fit together in a beautiful tapestry that makes more and more sense as you go along...

TRANS> So you see then how powerful and mighty this Sword of the Spirit is...

- For those who believe, it brings God's absolute unfailing truth into every situation...
 - It clears up all the confusion and makes us bold to stand up against falsehood because we know that God has spoken...
 - Christians are bearers of the light because they bear this sword!
 - It enables you to stand in the face of persecutions or mocking with the firmest confidence.
 - Once we believe, once we stop bringing our foolish sentiments and arguments and receive the pure word of God with meekness,
 - we are set free and we know that we know the truth—
- You see how powerful this sword is...
 - But because it is so powerful,

III. There is a concerted effort by Satan and all who are in league with him to take the Sword of the Spirit away from us.

- Satan is after this piece of armour more than any of the others...
 - This is the one that he cannot deal with...
 - The darkness he brings is dispelled when the word comes and the wicked have to run off to hide...
 - When God's sure judgments are pronounced, even the Devil himself is made to tremble.
- He carries out a mighty campaign to take away this sword...
 - And sadly, he has often been successful in his campaign!

- A. It is this very sword that he took from Adam and Eve in the Garden.
1. The Word of God was very plain and clear...
 - The Lord had very plainly commanded them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...
 - He had told them that in the day they ate of it, they would surely die.
 2. It was not because of a difficulty to understand this...
 - nor was it because Satan came and muscled this clear command away from Adam and Eve so that they no longer had it...
 - No, he rather talked them into laying the sword aside and deciding that what God said to do was neither good nor true...
 - They gave up the sword and did not use it in that day of evil and testing.
 - And so the same sword by which they might have chased away Satan turned on them to slay them!
 - The Word of God did not change—it said the same thing—
 - but now instead of them using it against Satan, God used it against them...
 - And so it was that in Adam, all died...
 - The sword of God's judgement came against us to shut us out from life in communion with God in paradise.
 - What God gave us to preserve life now became for us an instrument of death.
 3. But blessed be the Lord who came to us in His mercy and put the sword back into our hands again...
 - He came to Adam and Eve and promised that He would bring forth a people that would come out of the rebellion into which all had fallen...
 - And that He would bring forth a Saviour from the woman's seed who would crush the leader of the rebellion's head—even Satan.
 - And all those God had chosen heard the promise, yearned for the promise, and embraced the promise...
 - By faith, they were all reconciled to God,
 - believing that He would do what He had spoken...
 - Once again, the sword became a sword that brought life to them instead of a sword of death.
 - And they brandished it against their enemies.

B. But Satan once again attacked the Sword...all through the Old Testament...

1. God continued to put the Word in the hands of His people,
 - promising by the word that He would make them as numerous as the sand...
 - that He would bless those who blessed them and curse those who cursed them...
 - He brought this powerful sword to show them how to live for Him in this dark world—
 - He renewed His moral law that had been written in their hearts from the start...
 - And He more and more revealed His promise through the ceremonies that pointed them to the Lamb of God that would come to take away the sin of the world...
 - the one who could come to crush all of His enemies...
2. And as long as they continued in the word...
 - As long as they held on to this sword and used it against all their adversaries, the church in the Old Testament flourished and prospered...
 - They went forward by the power of God's Spirit, conquering...
 - But Satan came to them again and again to question God deliverance...
 - They often doubted what God had promised and questioned if He could even provide for them in the wilderness...
 - and then if could actually bring them into the land of Canaan when their enemies were so secure and strong.
 - The problem was not that the word was not clear—
 - God's instruction and God's promise were perfectly clear...
 - The problem was that they put down the sword—they laid aside the word—and were swallowed up in despair...
 - And over and over again,
 - when their enemies came they doubted God and went for help from other nations when God's word promised that He would deliver them...
 - At last, the same sword that was given to deliver them and give them life was turned upon them to bring them into captivity...

C. And it is no different now that Jesus has come... now that we have seen the promise—we have seen the One that God promised of old and we have seen what He has done to save us...

1. God has told us in His word that Christ is sufficient to take away our sins...

- He has told us that all who trust in Him will not be disappointed...
 - He has given us even clearer instructions about how we are to live in His calling as disciples of Jesus Christ.
 - We have the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, that brings light and truth to every encounter...
 - Even in the first centuries Satan began to take away the sword... bringing in human reason and all sorts of other things...
2. In the days just before the Reformation, Satan launched an attack from within the very church itself to take away the Word of God from His people.
- The very ones who were supposed to shepherd his people refused to give them His word...
 - They forbade it to be translated into the language of the people...
 - And they set themselves up as Priests and saviours instead of preaching Christ...
 - It was in the Reformation that God put the sword back into the hand of His people again...
 - He raised up men all around the world—Hus, Luther, Tyndale, Calvin, Whycliff, Zwingly, Knox, and many others...
 - And these men came forth and began to give the people the word of the God...
 - They translated it and they preached it and they upheld it...
 - And the word, as always, brought truth and comfort...
 - As always, it called the people to look to God’s salvation in Christ—not to the church to save them...
 - It showed them what Christ had done for them and it made them secure in His salvation...
 - Oh it is such a powerful sword!
 - In its light, the darkness was chased away.
- D. But then Satan launched another attack to take the sword from God’s people...
- It is a very effective attack...
1. He raised up right within the very church itself men who began, in the name of science and reason, to question the integrity of the word...
- They put forth all sorts of arguments to say that it was not really the word of God at all, but only the word of men...
 - They claimed that it was not written by the ones that who claimed to write it but rather by those that lived after them and wrote for political motives...
 - They claimed that it was not in agreement with history or with science...

- They began to question everything...
 - how could God create the world in six days?
 - how could a man be born of a virgin?
 - how could a man be raised from the dead?

- 2. And then people grew up in the church who never really embraced the word...
 - They were not really acquainted with it as the Word of God...
 - These ones soon laid down the sword of the Spirit...
 - What use was it if it is but the word of man?
 - From their perspective, it had no power...
 - Soon even the gospel itself was jettisoned and they were left to save themselves,
 - no longer having God's promise to save them.

- 3. But there were a few who held on to the word through these times...
 - So Satan launched another assault...
 - He raised up distraction for these,
 - even within the church itself, so as to cause them to neglect the word and minimise its importance...
 - He got them to focus on mission—on trying to attract unbelievers...
 - and to get so focused on this that they would lay aside the word...
 - Instead of bringing the light of God's word to shine in darkness of this sinful world,
 - they began to bring a word that was tailored to please unbelievers...
 - The gospel was changed from a call to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ to a call to come and get your felt needs met by God who loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.
 - The Word of God was replaced by this powder-puff gospel...
 - and once again, men are left without the sure way of salvation...
 - They are left to grope in the darkness.

IV. Oh my brothers and sisters, I urge you to take up the Sword of the Spirit!

- Take up the word of God!
 - Take it up and use it to bring God's perspective to every situation.

A. Give yourself to the regular reading of God's word!

1. This is the means by which God brings His light and truth to us—
 - You live in a world of darkness...
 - And this is where light is found...
2. Tell me, you who claim to have no time for the word...
 - What is it that is so important as to take you from the very thing that brings you out of lies into the reality of God?
 - How can you not have time for this?
 - This is your spiritual food and without it you will die!

B. And having given yourself to reading, give yourself to meditation of the word...

1. The sword is meant to be used—it is not just a decoration that you set up for beauty...
 - You are to bring the truth to bear upon your own life—upon the life of the people around you...
 - You are to look at how it applies to your daily work, to your attitudes, to the things that are going on...
 - You are to apply the promises and the comforts...
 - These promises, when you understand them, are so precious that you will want to go over them again and again in your mind...
 - A man caught in lust will go over the object of his desire again and again...
 - His mind will continually return to the beloved subject...
 - Let this be true of you with respect to God's counsel and promises.
2. The man that is said to be blessed in Psalm 1 is not the man who merely reads, but the one who meditates on the word day and night.
 - It is a sword that is to be applied to everything...
 - the way your children behave,
 - the conversation at work,
 - the way you treat your spouse,
 - the way you deal with an enemy...
 - the way you look at your afflictions and difficulties...
 - Bring the light of God's word into the matter and consider how it applies...
 - That is what you do when you meditate...
 - You integrate the word with your life and your situation.

3. As our confession puts it,

- when you have truth faith wrought by God's Spirit, you will...
 - "believe to be true *whatsoever is revealed in the Word*, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein, and will act differently upon that which each particular passage thereof contains; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.
 - And above all,
 - the Word will direct you to accept, receive, and rest upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life...

TRANS> But this is still not all...

C. Private interaction with God's word is essential, but God has also ordained that His people hear the word preached.

1. You take up the sword by diligent and regular attention to the word preached...
 - You are to come with eagerness, prayerfulness, proper restedness to hear the word preached because God has ordained this method...
 - He has appointed the ordinance of preaching and He sends forth preachers to minister His word and commands that they be supported by the church.
2. Preaching is above all truth applied...
 - The minister is to take the Word and to give the sense of it and to show how it applies to you as God's people...
 - God's Spirit uses the word preached to cause His people to hear the voice of Christ.
3. This is not to be for entertainment or to have your ears tickled...
 - It is that the Word might powerfully speak into your life to bring light to you in this dark world...
 - Through preaching, the sword of the Spirit is put into your hand by God's Spirit for you to use.

D. And finally, there should be discourse concerning the word...

1. You are to talk of the Word and how it applies to those under your care...
 - Deut 6:6-7: And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.
 - You are to have times that are set apart for this (when you sit down together for family worship)

- and you are to do it when you are walking about in the course of the day...
 - You are to speak about how the word applies to the troubles, to the blessings, to the needs, to the temptations...
 - to the things the people of this age are doing...
 - to everything.
2. And you are to encourage other brothers and sisters in the church with God's Word...
- a. You are to speak to of God's commandments and God's promises and talk of how they apply to you...
 - And you are to bring an appropriate word to them to show how the word to applies to them—
 - in the sorrows, to comfort them with the word...
 - in their sins, to rebuke them...
 - in their sluggishness, to admonish them...
 - in their discouragement, to encourage them...
 - b. But probably more than anything,
 - You need to speak about how the word applies to the darkness around you...
 - You and your brother live in this dark world where the truth is continually distorted...
 - and it is for you to take the sword and expose the error by bringing forth the truth of the word.
 - c. And as you have opportunity,
 - you are also to bring the word to bear on those who do not know God...
 - With gentleness, you are to demolish their arguments...
 - With confidence, you are to set forth the truth.
 - And I remind you that when you do,
 - you speak what is real and what will surely come to pass...
 - Though they laugh and mock,
 - the salvation you proclaim is real...
 - and the judgment you proclaim is also real...
 - It will come to pass because it is God's word.
 - It will not return void.