

June 23,2023

Last Sunday June 25<sup>th</sup> Lauren talked about the Human Spirit our Identity.

Tonight, we are going to talk on of the items we are equipped with a two-edge sword.

**A two-edged sword** meaning in the dictionary says that which has negative effects as well as positive effects. It is for battle and healing.

To be a Christian is to be a warrior. The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world: it is a battlefield. Neither must we reckon upon the friendship of the world; for that would be enmity against God. One of our occupations is war. As we put on piece by piece of the armory provided for us, we may wisely say to ourselves, this warns us of danger; this prepares us for warfare; this prophesies opposition. Difficulties meet us even in standing our ground; we are to put on the heavenly armor in order that we may stand; and we will need it to maintain the position in which our Captain has placed us. If even to stand requires all this care, judge us what the warfare must be! In this it speaks of withstanding as well as standing. We are not merely to defend, but also to assail. It is not enough that we are not conquered; we have to conquer and hence we find that we are to take, not only a helmet to protect the head, but also a sword, with which to annoy the enemy. Ours, therefore, is a stern conflict, standing and withstanding; and we shall want all the armor from the divine magazine, all the strength from the Mighty triune God.

“Ehud made a cubit-long two-edged sword for himself and strapped it onto his right thigh under his cloak.” Judges 3:16

If Joshua is the happiest book in the Old Testament – since it describes a time when the people of Israel are genuinely eager to obey God – Judges, the very next book in your table of contents, is the most tragic. The juxtaposition is startling. Even though God’s people are finally free and living in a homeland of their own, something goes wrong in the leadership handoff between the generation of Joshua and the generation that follows. “After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).

The result is spiritual anarchy. The people disobey God, which plunges them into crisis. They cry out in despair. God sends them deliverers. After receiving relief, however, the people return to disobedience. This cycle is reported more than a dozen times in the book of Judges. Disobedience, despair, deliverance, repeat.

Although the English word “judge” became associated with Israel’s deliverers, a better description might simply be “leader” or even “guerilla fighter.” God’s people typically fought as underdogs against much larger and better-equipped enemies.

Which brings us to the account of Ehud, who, by resorting to sheer chutzpah, takes down one of Israel’s chief foes all by himself.

Judges 3:15 notes the crucial detail that Ehud is left-handed. Throughout history, something like 90% of humanity has led with the right hand. Hence the Latin word for right is dexter (from which we get “dexterity”). The left hand – even today in the developing world – has traditionally been reserved for personal hygiene. The Latin word for left is sinister. Enough said. No one in polite company would ever extend his or her left hand to another person without generating suspicion that something was seriously wrong.

Eglon, the morbidly obese king of Moab, has subjugated Israel for 18 years, forcing the people (like a mob boss) to purchase his favor with treasure. Ehud is chosen to deliver the next payoff.

Our “3:16” verse tells us that Ehud straps a short sword to his right thigh, presumably on the inside of his leg. Upon visiting the king he says, “Your Majesty, I have a secret message for you.” Intrigued, Eglon clears the room. As Ehud approaches the throne, he reaches with his left hand under his garment. The king thinks he has nothing to fear, since a real warrior (a man of honor) would reach for a weapon only with his right hand.

“Ehud reached with his left hand, drew the sword from his right thigh and plunged it into the king’s belly. Even the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged. Ehud did not pull the sword out, and the fat closed over it. Then Ehud went out to the porch. He shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them” (Judges 3:20-23).

As if those graphic fine points aren’t enough, here come the laughs. “After he had gone, the servants came and found the doors of the upper room locked. They said, ‘He must be relieving himself in the inner room of the palace.’ They waited to the point of embarrassment, but when he did not open the doors of the room, they took a key and unlocked them. There they saw their lord fallen to the floor, dead” (3:24-25).

The story of Ehud feels raw. Why are there so many unpleasant and unsettling stories like this on the pages of God’s Word? We can answer that question by posing another one: Have you seen the local news lately? There are unpleasant and unsettling events in every community every day.

The Bible is not a collection of morality tales, or “nice stories” designed to promote good behavior in children. The biblical authors felt empowered to report adultery, genocide, treason,

rape, incest, and betrayal, even when such dark realities tainted the reputations of so-called “heroes of the faith.” The authors

We live, after all, in an R-rated world – one that is Rough, Raw, and Real. Yet it is also Redemptive.

Life may be a mess much of the time, but God is at work in the middle of it all. As the Lord had directed the course of history through Ehud and those in His Word, He does the same thing by working through us.

The Greek word for a “two-edged sword” is the word *rhomphaia*, which describes one of the most fearsome weapons of the ancient world. Romans had a sundry of swords, but no sword was more feared than the *rhomphaia*. This was a sword that had been developed by Thracians, who were among the most aggressive fighters of the First Century. Thracian fighters used many weapons, which included a sword like that of the Romans, a sickle, a polearm, and a *rhomphaia*—the same word that is translated as a “two-edged sword” coming from Christ’s mouth in Revelation 1:16. The *rhomphaia* was a long-bladed weapon attached to a long pole. Its extraordinary length gave a fighter superior striking power so that, if needed, it could replace the spear. A fighter with a *rhomphaia* was able to deal a deadly, slicing blow to an enemy with a wide swing from a relatively safe distance, and its two-edged blade was so razor sharp that it could cut through most armor. The blade of a *rhomphaia* was usually slightly curved and therefore ideal for thrashing, slicing, and hacking one’s way through a densely populated enemy line. Its iron blade was sharpened on both sides to give it the most superior cutting action. If the slender curve of the blade was wrapped around an opponent’s midsection and pulled, this sword could easily slice an enemy’s body in half. Romans dreaded this weapon so much that they adapted their armor with new mountings to protect themselves from the slicing and hacking motion of the *rhomphaia*. When needed, the outer rounded edge of this sword was ideal for decapitation. What an aggressive vindictive description. Yet, not exactly what God has in design.

In Ephesians 6 it is noteworthy that there is only one weapon of offense provided, although there are several pieces of armor. The Roman soldier usually carried a spear as well as a sword. We have seen frequent representations of the legionary standing upon guard as sentry, and he almost always stands with a spear in his right hand, while his sword hangs at his side. Yet Paul, for excellent reasons, concentrates our offensive weapon in one, because it answers for all. We are to use the sword, and that only. Therefore, if you are going to this fight, see well to your only weapon. If you are to have no other, take care that you have this always in your hand. Let the Captain's voice ring in your ear, "Take the sword! Take the sword!", and so go forth to the field. Notice, first, the sword you are to take is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. That is our first head; and the second is equally upon the surface of the text: This sword is to be ours. We are ordered to take the sword of the Spirit, and so make it our own sword

Let the high praises of God be in their mouths, and two-edged (פִּי:פִּי pîyphîyâh:edge, mouth) swords (רֶבֶר:chereb) in their hands,” Psalms 149:6

The two-edged sword is designed to penetrate not just slice. In Hebrew it means two-mouthed sword. One edge of this sword came into existence when the Word initially proceeded out of God’s mouth. The second edge of this sword was added when the Word of God proceeded out of our mouth. He is the glory within us. Our praise is not merely to be that of the chanting of words. It is also to be in the doing of His will. While the high praises of God are in our mouth, a two-edged sword is to be in our hand, with which we carry out His purposes among the peoples, the kings, and the nobles.

Never allow the evil around you to dim the glory within you. Let the Lord hear the sound and see your glistening face as you seek Him. He is the glory within; the inner workings of your two-edge sword for Him.

Hebrews 4:12

Is an idiom for a sword designed to penetrate, not just slice. Yet the etymology is interesting. Do you suppose the word of God speaks with “two mouths,” one that appears easily understood, even facile: and the other that drives deep, upsetting everything in its path? One cuts through all pretense, deceit, and falsehood to reveal the truth. The two-edged sword separates us from our impurities God has made us into purified gold. The word of the Lord does cut through the excuses and rationalizations of those who refuse to believe. Yet it also stands in judgment over us – the ones who claim to be followers. When we do not emulate the character of the Christ within, God’s crushing judgment is revealed by those given His authority. They become harbingers of our souls, raining the awful power of God upon our hypocrisy. That process of transformation requires that all that is not Spirit-led be sharply cut away from us. We need both edges of the sword. We do not say that we enjoy both edges. The cutting process is often “crushing judgment” over some action or thought that we imagined we could keep as our own. God will never allow it. He is often required to slice it away in a bloody battle of spiritual submission. Lord, cut me where it counts.

“For the word of God is alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12

The message God spoke to us in Christ, is the most life giving and dynamic influence in us, cutting like a surgeon’s scalpel, sharper than a soldier’s sword, piercing to the deepest core of human conscience, to the dividing of soul and spirit, ending the dominance of the sense realm and its neutralizing effect upon the human spirit. In this way a person’s spirit is freed to become the ruling influence again in the thoughts and intentions of their heart. The scrutiny of this living Sword-Logos detects every possible disease, discerning the body’s deepest secrets where joint

and bone-marrow meet. (The moment we cease from our own efforts to justify ourselves, by yielding to the integrity of the message that announces the success of the Cross, God's word is triggered into action. What God spoke to us in sonship (the incarnation), radiates His image and likeness in our redeemed innocence. [Hebrews 1:1-3] This word powerfully penetrates and impacts our whole being body, soul, and spirit. The Sword would always point back to mankind's original identity. The Hebrew word in Gen 3:24, הָפַךְ *hâpak* is a primitive root; meaning to turn about; by implication to change, to return, to be converted, turn back. Also, in the Septuagint the same thought is communicated in the Greek word, *strephō*, which is strengthened from the base of *tropay*; to turn around or reverse: - convert, turn again, back again, to turn self about.

"He had in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. His appearance was like the sun shining brightly." Revelation 1:16

Notice that this "two-edged sword" came out of Jesus' mouth not His hand. In His right hand He held seven stars, and His words were like a sharp two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth. His face shone like the sun in its full strength. Jesus loves the Church. Even when He brings painful corrections to His people, He does so to help them, not to attack or to kill them. The concept of brutality has no place in the character of Christ.

Revelation 2:16 on the imagery of the two-edged sword. Also, Hebrews 4:12 and Revelation 19:15, 19:21. Hebrews 1:1 Throughout ancient times God spoke in many fragments and glimpses of prophetic thought to our fathers. Now, this entire conversation has finally dawned in sonship. In these last days (eschatos) God has spoken to us in the radiance of our redeemed sonship and innocence. Suddenly, what seemed to be an ancient language, falls fresh and new like the dew on the tender grass. Deuteronomy 32:1-4 He is the sum total of every utterance of God. He is whom the Prophets pointed to, and we are His immediate audience. What God said about 'you-mankind' and their redeemed sonship and innocence in Jesus, defines eschatology. The Word of God is like a sword that has two edges, cutting both ways and doing terrible damage to an aggressor.

Let's go back to Ephesians 6:17 calls it "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" *rhema*, which describes something that is spoken clearly, vividly, in unmistakable terms and undeniable language. In the New Testament, the word *rhema* carries the idea of a quickened word. Here's an example of a *rhema* or a quickened word: You are praying about a situation, and suddenly a Bible verse rises from inside your heart. At that moment, you are consciously aware that God has given you a verse to stand on and to claim for your situation. You've received a word that came right out of the mouth of God and dropped into your spirit. That word from God was so sharp that it cut right through your questions, intellect, and natural logic and lodged deep within your heart. After you meditated on that *rhema*, or that quickened word from God, it suddenly began to release its power inside you. Soon you couldn't contain it any longer! Everything within you

wanted to declare what God had said to you. You wanted to say it. You want to release it out of your mouth! And when you did, those powerful words were sent forth like a mighty blade to drive back the forces of hell that had been marshaled against you, your family, your business, your ministry, your finances, your relationship, or your body.

First, that word came out of the mouth of God. Next, it came out of your mouth. When it came out of your mouth, it became a sharp, “two-edged” — or literally, a “two-mouthed” — sword. One edge of this sword came into existence when the Word initially proceeded out of God’s mouth.

Second edge of this sword was added when the Word of God proceeded out of your mouth. Something happens in the realm of the Spirit when you finally rise up and begin to speak forth that word. The moment it comes out of your mouth, a second edge is added to the blade. Nothing is more powerful than a word that comes first from God’s mouth and then from your mouth. You and God have come into agreement, and that agreement releases His mighty power into the situation at hand. When you are confronted by a challenge from the demonic realm, the Holy Spirit will be able to reach down into the reservoir of God’s Word you have stored up on the inside of you and pull up the exact scripture you need for that moment.

As that quickened *rhema* word from God begins to first fill your heart and mind and then come out of your mouth, it becomes that “two-mouthed sword” described in the Scriptures. *That’s* when demons start to tremble in terror!

Whatever others may say, it is sufficient for us that this is the regulation sword. A soldier is not left to choose his own equipment; he must carry such arms as His sovereign appoints. This is the regulation sword in Christ’s army. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is what we are bidden to take; and if we in willfulness resolve to exchange it for another, we commit an act of rebellion, and we make the change at our own risk and peril. Come, then, let us each one of us take the Word of God, and carry it nearer our hearts than ever; for such is the word of command, “Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

We do not bury the Two-Edged Sword; we are to take the Sword with purpose.

1. Can you remember a time when a specific scripture suddenly sprang up from down deep inside you, causing you to feel super-charged and empowered by God's Spirit?

2. When God speaks to you, do you first meditate on that rhema word and then let it come out of your mouth, or do you forget to speak that quickened word out loud and thus fail to release its power?

3. According to what you read today, what happens when you and God begin to speak the same thing?