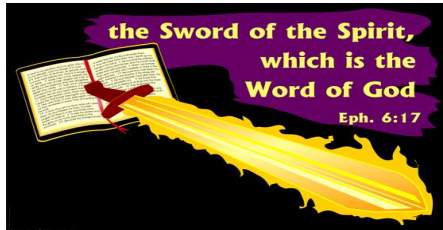


**“Be Strong in the Lord by
Wielding the Sword of the Spirit,
Which is the Word of God”**

by Elder Bill Jones

The Apostle Paul defines the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT as the WORD OF GOD (read Ephesians 6:17). Our theme for the month suggests we can “Be Strong in the Lord by Wielding the Sword of the Spirit, Which is the Word of God.”



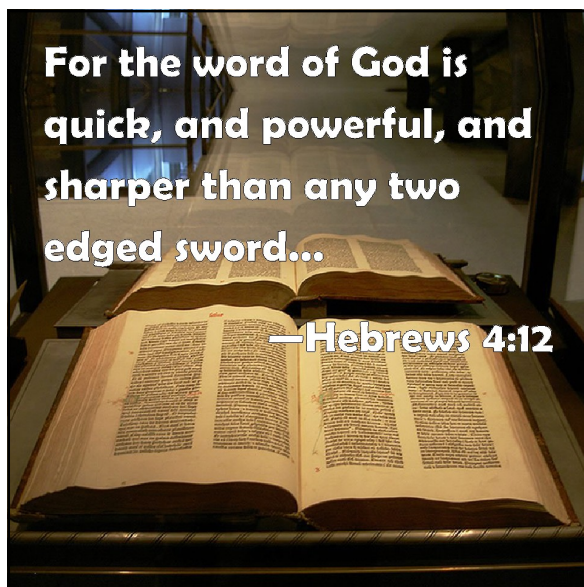
The word WIELDING, used with the phrase THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, suggests that we are to put the Sword of the Spirit, or the Word of God, to active use in our lives; we are to apply it in such a way as to be able to determine if our thoughts and attitudes are acceptable to God or if we have to make adjustments in how we conduct our lives.

The Sword of the Spirit is valuable as a means of defense against the deceptions of the adversary. With it we can apply the Word of God against those things which are not true. In addition it provides us with the capability of defending against spiritual attacks that are designed to disrupt our lives. If we use it effectively it can enhance our ability to discern those thoughts and attitudes that are contrary to God’s ways.

The Word of God is to be studied so we may become knowledgeable in its use, and we must be practiced in the use of that knowledge if we are to be able to discern good from evil, and react appropriately.

Hebrews 4:12 describes the reason why the Word of God is so valuable or essential in determining if the manner in which we conduct our lives conforms to God's desires for us. The attributes it lists are these: "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of body and spirit [which division represents death], and of the joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**" The words of this scripture help us to begin to arrive at a sense of the POWER and the USEFULNESS of God's Word.

Paul's words are well chosen. It is no accident that he refers to the Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit. He does so, that those to whom He speaks [which includes us] will realize how dynamic the Word of God is and the myriad possibilities of what can be accomplished with the application of His Word.



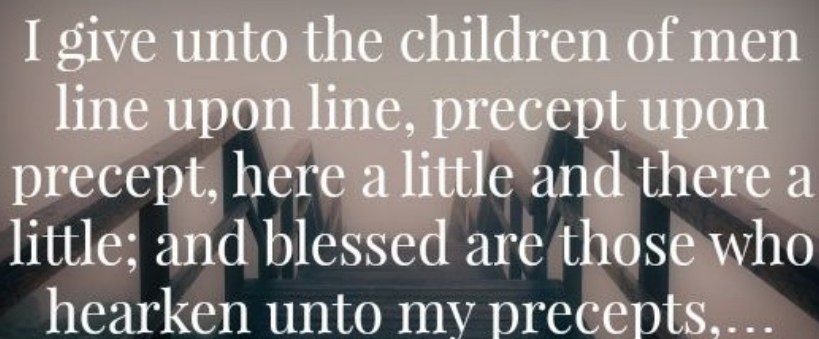
It makes us aware we are to be aggressively involved in good works; in doing those things which are pleasing to God. Paul's words leave us no room to be passive or to stand quietly by in the presence of evil. Roy Cheville, in his book, Did the Light Go Out?, says: ". . . one might try to solve the problem of evil by withdrawing from it and leaving it alone. But this does not stop the evil conditions from spreading and from becoming stronger. Evil is not inactive and retiring If goodness is not intelligently aggressive and if it does not come into ascendancy, the forces of evil will come to dominate."

God offers opportunities to us to be strong in the Lord and actively contending for that which is right by seeking to find ways to WIELD THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT. If we do so it means we are willing to accept and apply the Word of the Lord. If we do not take the opportunity offered it shows our indifference. We should give consideration to the concern and displeasure it causes God when we exhibit our indifference to His interest in us.

Twenty-five hundred years ago Nephi said, "Wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion" (read 2 Nephi 12:30). The Spirit moved through Nephi to denounce spiritual complacency and express concern about men ignoring and minimizing the Word of God, while instead "hearken. . . [ing] unto the precepts of [other] men, and deny. . . [ing] the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost" (read 2 Nephi 12:31).

To be “Strong in the Lord by Wielding the Sword of the Spirit, Which is the Word of God,” is not just a suggestion; it is God’s intent to bless us with His Word.

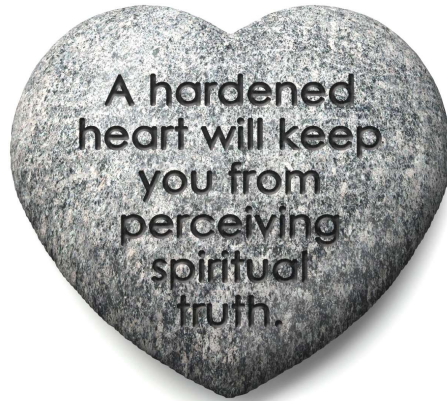
But what comes of those who ignore or minimize the Word of God? What comes of those who have said, “. . . We have received the Word of God, and we need no more of the Word of God, for we have enough.”? (read 2 Nephi 12:35).



I give unto the children of men
line upon line, precept upon
precept, here a little and there a
little; and blessed are those who
hearken unto my precepts,...

What happens when a people harden their hearts and will not listen? It leads to deterioration and separation from God and perhaps spiritual death. Yet God continues to profess His love for us when He says: “. . . I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; And blessed are those who hearken unto My precepts, and lend an ear unto My counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; For unto him that receiveth, I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, shall be taken away even that which they have.” (read 2 Nephi 12:36-38)

All through history, the tendency for the majority of mankind has been to try the patience of God. They have hardened their hearts, which has led to receiving only the lesser portion of God's Word.



He has tried to persuade mankind to be receptive to the greater portion of His Word which leads to knowing the mysteries of God until they know them in full. He continues making the effort because it is important to the salvation of each one of us.

And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

— Luke 8:10

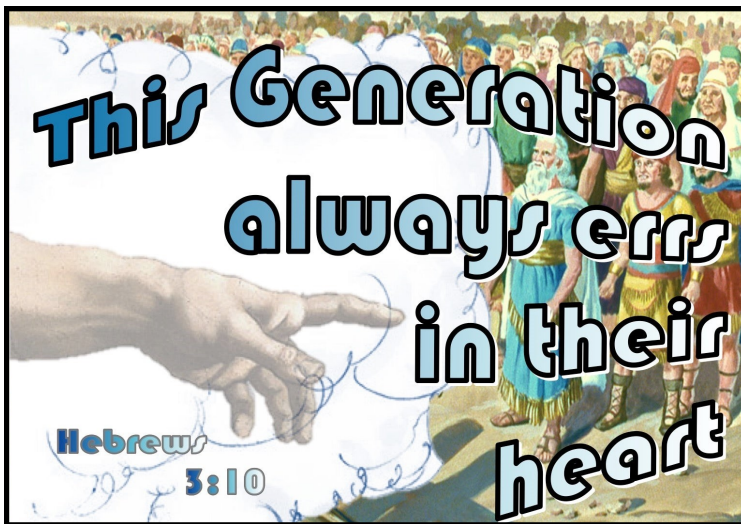


Where is the danger in settling for the lesser portion of God's Word? The danger is in trying to wield the Sword of the Spirit for defense against the forces of evil when the sword is comprised of the lesser portion of God's Word.

In other words, its construction or its substance is inferior and we are left vulnerable. Alma 9:19-20 clearly explains the danger. "And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the Word until they know nothing concerning His [God's] mysteries; And then they are **taken captive by the devil** and led by his will down to destruction." Obviously, our concern should be how well armed we are and how much of God's Word we understand.

There is an interesting disclosure by the Holy Spirit to the Apostle Paul, concerning God's feelings about how much of His Word that we understand. The Spirit had been discussing the Nation of Israel and its wanderings in the wilderness for 40 years. It talked of the people hardening their hearts toward God and their many shortcomings with which God expressed much displeasure. He begins by saying, "Wherefore, I was grieved with that generation and said, **They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways.**" (read Hebrews 3:10)

Those are two key factors of which we need to be concerned. They affect our interaction with God and affirms to us the necessity of diligently pursuing the Word of God until we, with understanding, receive of its fullness. To settle for less is to our detriment. It is displeasing to God, and it places limitations on our association with Him.



We can “Be Strong in the Lord by Wielding the Sword of the Spirit, Which is the Word of God” by following Paul’s suggestion in Hebrews 3:13. “. . . exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

This suggests that we make the effort each day to learn and incorporate into our lives the information and habits that help us to understand the things of God that will please Him and keep us from erring because of poor judgments created by those deceptions which are intended to cause sin.

We can set the examples for one another that remind us to be faithful and humble and submissive to the Lord’s will. We can remember to learn wisdom, and cry unto the Lord for support. We can follow the counsel of Alma to his son, Helaman: “Yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest, let it be in the Lord; yea let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever; counsel the Lord in all thy doings, and He will direct thee for good.” (read Alma 17:69)

