

# Milk & Honey

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*Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ*

## My Favorite Weapon

Carl Knott

Some people like knives, others guns, others bows and arrows. I have a favorite, that is extremely effective at close and long range, day or night, all-weather, and can get through any metal detector or x-ray machine! I know! I have taken it with me on all kinds of public transportation. What will you think of me when I tell you that I keep this weapon in plain sight and within reach of all my children and grandchildren, and even let them handle it?

Let me tell you about it. My all-time favorite weapon is the Bible, the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). It is listed as a vital part of the Christian's armor, and we should note that it is the only offensive weapon he is given. Like it or not, we are in a spiritual war, with powerful, astute and veteran enemies arrayed against us in relentless conflict. Scripture exhorts us to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). To go forth without armor or weapon is not faith but insanity.

And what a unique and impressive and effective weapon it is. In 1 Samuel 21:9, when David in fleeing Saul sought a weapon, the priest told him the only weapon available was "the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod." David replied, "There is none like that; give it me." Now Goliath's sword was unique in its class, but the Bible is even moreso! Hebrews 4:12 gives the specifications of this weapon: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

It's alive, and powerful, and the sharpest weapon that exists. A surgeon's scalpel is dull in comparison. This sword of the Spirit doesn't draw blood, but it does get into the soul and spirit of a person. It does inside work! Sometimes I hear people say, "You can't know what's in another person's heart." My reply is, "I have something that penetrates and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart." God knows all about what is in the human heart, and has written a Book about it!

That's why the Devil hates the Scriptures and tries to distract and discourage Christians from using them. He knows the damage that the sword of the Spirit can do. He knows that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Cor. 10:4). He knows it, but do we realize what we have in our hands? It can expose sin and bring about conviction. It can reprove and rebuke. It can pronounce judgment. It can illuminate the darkness, break the chains of spiritual bondage, and bring a person into the light of salvation. It is a key instrument in the new birth (1 Pet. 1:23). The story is told of a buddist monk who sat on the ground to rest, and picked up a scrap of paper near him. It had been torn from a New Testament. There were only a few words on that little scrap of paper: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The sword went to work and pierced his conscience. He said, "If that is true, then I will never see God for my heart is not pure." And that led to a search for the book from which that scrap had come, which led to the Gospel and salvation. Such is the power of the sword of the Spirit. God blesses and uses His Word, not our clever arguments or tear-jerker stories. Use the Word!

That's why when Spurgeon was asked to participate in a debate on the validity of the Bible, he said he would come but not present any defense of the Bible. He would preach the Gospel. He said, "The Bible is a lion. You don't defend a lion, you turn it loose!" It's the same with the sword. A sword doesn't need to be defended, but used. If the other person says he doesn't believe in your sword, don't put it down. That's what the devil wants you to do. Quote the Scriptures, read them, cite them, use them. Let your adversary feel the point of the Sword. He may not like it but he will certainly know it's real!

Now here's the catch. In order for us to effectively use the sword of the Spirit, we need to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and be spiritually minded, not worldly. We need to be familiar with our weapon, and with how it is intended to be used. And we must first use it on ourselves, before others!

Effective Bible handling depends on familiarity and practice. How can Christians possible be effective using the Scriptures if we spend more time on internet, texting, watching tv or movies or listening to the music than we

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# Continued Stedfastly

Steve Hulshizer

My older brothers and I often listened to a radio sports program (no TV then!) on which the broadcaster usually closed by saying, “Quitters never win, and winners never quit.” While not a quote from Scripture it would not contradict Scripture either. Certainly Christ had every intention to finish what He started, “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and *to finish his work.*” John 4:34

In a Biblical reference that is well known by many there are a few words that are often overlooked as we tend to focus on the other important words and truths. “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42) The words to which I refer are “continued stedfastly.” The verse gives a clear indication of the activities of the early church. The words “continued stedfastly” informs us of the *serious attention* that was given to these activities.

Priority was given to these gatherings of the saints in the local body. In baseball a player who gets three base hits out of every ten times he bats is often paid millions of dollars. However, attendance at three out of ten gatherings would no doubt be of great concern to the early saints. There was a *consistency* in their gathering together.

“Continuing” has been a problem from the very beginning of man’s existence. Adam was a “quitter!” At one time he walked with God, but the day came when he believed he could do better on his own and he quit. By his quitting his dependence on God, by disobeying the Divine commandment, he bought down the human race. (Rom. 5:12, 19)

The nation of Israel did the same on multiple occasions. The writer to the Hebrews states they “continued not.” “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they *continued not* in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. (Heb. 8:9)

The disciples “went back and walked no more with Him.” (John 6:66) Mark also quit while working with the apostle Paul. (Acts 15:38) Demas quit and left Paul “having loved this present world.” (2 Tim. 4:10)

In contrast to these are were others who “continued.” The sun continues to rise and fall and rise again. “The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.” (Ecc. 1:5) Noah continued through many years to finish the ark as God had instructed him. “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him,

so did he.” (Gen. 6:22) Daniel was another who continued his practice of prayer even when threatened. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforesime.* (Dan. 6:10) Paul too finished well. (2 Tim. 4:7)

In great contrast to all others, God is a “finisher.” Creation is a witness to this truth. “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” (Gen. 2:1) Thankfully He completed His creation which included finite man, even knowing what man would become. If man was ever to be reconciled to God there was a need for redemption. This brought the Lamb of God into a sinful world. Wonderfully Christ completed this work despite the awfulness of the task. Luke gives us some insight into that moment when Christ anticipated those three hours of darkness in which the wrath of a Holy God would fall on Him for man’s sins. “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (Luk. 22:44)

John records those wonderful words which our Savior cried at the end of those horrible three hours. “It is finished!” “Paid in full!” The basis for God to justify man and remain just Himself was completed perfectly. (Rom. 3:26) John records that amazing song of the redeemed, “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:9-10) The angels and others add, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Rev. 5:12-13)

Now there are many exhortations in Scripture for us to continue and not quit. Too many are quitting their marriages. Others are quitting in the workplace, maybe not by leaving the job, but by doing less than an honest day’s work. Many are quitting when it comes to the local assembly. They are inconsistent in their attendance, and some have no difficulty drifting from church to church having no commitment to any. Again Scripture speaks clearly to this behavior. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” ( Heb. 10:25)

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# God Deplores Religiosity

Isaiah 1 (Part 1)

Warren Henderson

In Isaiah's opening message He conveys God's utter disgust for Israel's vain religiosity; "Wickedness and the solemn meeting I cannot bear" (1:13; JND). He utterly despised their sacrifices, offerings, prayers, and observances! The seriousness of Israel's offense is bluntly expressed by the phrase "My soul hates" (1:14), which literally means, "I hate with all my heart!" The Jews were a morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt people that were using religion as a cloak to cover their sin. The nation was superficially observing the Law without understanding the real purpose of what they were doing. William Kelly observes that the Jews in Isaiah's day had sacred form without the power of divine truth: "Divine privileges only rendered their moral state more portentous and intolerable. ... There was no real repentance, no trembling at His word, but a religious veil over utter and shameless iniquity."

Truth is a prominent moral and personal attribute of God: He is "the God of truth" (65:16), thus all that God says and commands is founded in truth (Ps. 119:142, 151). The Psalmist declares, "the entirety of Your word is truth" (119:160). God's perfect nature ensures that nothing less than absolute truth will be evident in all His words and deeds; He cannot lie or act contrary to His holy character (1 Sam. 15:29; Heb. 6:18). Therefore, if man truly desires to lay hold of deep truth (i.e. those unfathomable mysteries beyond natural explanation) he must venture beyond humanism, religiosity, and pride to humbly beseech Him who is the embodiment of all truth.

The Jews had religious movement, but no spiritual direction. The temple was bustling with pious activity, but true worshippers must approach God in revealed truth, and with pure hearts and clean hands to refresh His heart. To do otherwise, as Solomon proclaims, provokes the Lord to jealous anger: "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28:9). Though the Jews offered up "many prayers" to Jehovah, He ignored their irritating gestures of piety because of their deplorable spiritual and moral state. They lifted up their hands in prayer, but failed to notice that they were stained with innocent blood (1:15). Actions speak louder than words especially when the One who is listening and watching is omniscient. Their hearts were far from the Lord, their actions were offending the Lord, and hence, their prayers were loathed by Him.

Much of the vain religiosity of Judaism then is alive and well in Christendom today. Sadly, many professing Christians have become dull to the Word of God, deaf to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and seared in their conscience such that they can mindlessly practice their religion while continuing in sin. Isaiah's rebuke of Judah is no less applicable today. Dear believer, are you appreciating the joyful presence of a holy God? Do you feel that

the Lord is hearing and acting on your prayers? If not, it is time to take action.

## Reasons God Ignores Our Prayers

The following are several reasons why God may choose to ignore or not act on our prayers with favor:

1. Rejecting or not yielding to God's Word (Prov. 28:9; 1 Jn. 3:22).
2. Husbands not properly caring for and respecting their wives (1 Pet. 3:7).
3. Fostering selfish motives (Jas. 4:3).
4. Having an unforgiving heart (Mark 11:25).
5. Doubting God's faithfulness (Jas. 1:6-7; Mark 11:24).
6. Praying with unconfessed sin (Ps. 66:18).
7. Praying for what is contrary to God's will (1 Jn. 5:14-15).

The Church would do well to heed Isaiah's warning to Israel. It is human nature to traditionalize that which has no importance to God to displace what does. If Isaiah was before us today, He would affirm that the Lord hates check-the-box Christianity with the same fervor as vain Judaism. That which displaces true devotion to and appreciation for Christ with meaningless religious trinkets and habitual routines is loathsome to God.

*Nothing exposes religion more to the reproach of its enemies than the worldliness and hard-heartedness of its professors.*

Matthew Henry

When our awe of God is supplanted by stained-glass windows, huge pipe organs, gold crucifixes, burning candles, smoking incense, fancifully robed clergymen; or when meetings of the church become social gatherings; or when the study of God's Word is replaced by friendly chit-chat, storytelling, and entertaining spoofs; or when praising God becomes the occupation of professionals instead of all God's people; or when family activities trump meetings of the church; or when the lack of creature comforts hinders us from engaging in worship, we are no less guilty of snubbing God than Israel was in Isaiah's day. Would not such mindless superior behavior then provoke God's chastening hand? Lord, we ask you to do whatever it takes to awaken the pampered Church from her lethargic, semi-comatose spiritual condition for You must have the preeminence in all things, especially in Your Church (Col. 1:18)! \*

## York Bible Study

March 11th

Christ in the O.T. Offerings - John Kinlaw (NC)

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“*Continuing* instant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12) The exhortation here is to be “devoted” to prayer. Others translate the word as “persevering” in prayer. Paul exhorts those in Colossi in the same way, “*Continue* in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;” (Col. 4:2)

The apostle exhorts younger Timothy on several occasions to continue. In our age when doctrine is viewed by many as dry and boring, and to some unnecessary, we need to heed Paul’s exhortation, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; *continue* in them.” (1 Tim. 4:16” Again, “But *continue* thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” (2 Tim. 3:14)

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (Luk. 22:19) Certainly the Lord did not envision an assembly of saints being inconsistent in remembering Him. Surely He envisioned individual saints giving this opportunity to remember and worship Him high priority and thus would be consistent in their attendance.

There is much that contends with our being consistent and faithful to the things of the Lord. The adversary would encourage us to quit and like Demas go in for the things of this present age. However, that is what they are, “present” and temporal, while the unseen things of eternity are “out of this world.” Let’s continue on with the knowledge that we will experience that great moment when we hear Him say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.” Could anything in this world compare with that? \*

## Continued from Page 1 - *My Favorite Weapon*

spend in the Bible? Or if our home, study and business responsibilities consume our lives and we spend mere minutes in the Bible on a weekly basis, how can we hope to effectively use that great sword of the Spirit? When temptation or trouble arises, or an opportunity to witness presents itself, if we haven’t been handling the sword of the Word, we aren’t going to know what to do with it. It never ceases to amaze me that people can be in churches for years, decades, and never read through the Bible even once.

The remedy for that dangerous deficiency is to start reading right now and do so every day until you finish the whole Book. That’s basic orientation, step one. Continue your “weapon training” with Bible study (2 Tim. 2:15), Bible meditation (Psa. 1:2) and Bible memorization. (Psa. 119:9, 11) Also, when in meetings and Bible studies, pay attention and take notes. Note taking is a proven aid to study and memory. Get to know the sword of the Spirit, and become adept at using it. There is none like it.

Spurgeon wrote: “You know the old proverb... ‘Beware the man of one book.’ He is a terrible antagonist. A man who has the Bible at his fingers’ ends and in his heart’s core, is a champion in our Israel; you cannot compete with him: you may have an armory of weapons, but his Scriptural knowledge will overcome you, for it is a sword like that of Goliath, of which David said, ‘There is none like it.’” (Lectures To My Students, p. 180). \*

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**April 8, 2017**

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