

## **Keep the Sword Sharp**

***Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered:  
and many such like things do ye.***

***Mark 7:13***

In describing the Christian soldier's spiritual armament in Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul compares the Word of God with a sword. A sword is both an offensive and defensive weapon in a soldier's arsenal. It can deflect thrusts from enemy weapons while also attacking to achieve victory. Hebrews 4 also compares the Word of God to a sharp two-edged sword that is so sharp that it can not only penetrate the flesh but can also pierce the soul and spirit and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. This Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the foundation upon which Christians build their spiritual lives. It is food for the soul, that brings conviction, comfort, hope, and inspiration for believers. It is meant to be heard and then incorporated into sincere application.

The context of today's verse is an occasion when our Lord is rebuking the Pharisees for their strict adherence to traditions rather than simple faith in God's Word. The Word loses its effectiveness when tradition replaces the truth. People can learn and routinely perform ceremonies and lose sight of the spiritual significance of The Word. Traditions had become so ingrained in the religious fabric of Judaism that the religious leaders lost sight of God's true purpose for them. Keeping the Sabbath was more important to them than helping someone in need. Outwardly demonstrating their religion was more important to them than humbly and sincerely obeying the Lord. Pharisees fastidiously kept the minute details of the law and traditions and omitted the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith.

As sharp and powerful as the Word of God is, believers can dull its effectiveness by living out their faith to be seen by others and satisfy their prideful flesh. This manifests in a variety of ways. Do we carry our Bible to church yet rarely read it through the week? Do we attend prayer meetings and neglect the private prayer closet? Do we tithe our income and yet overlook needs that cross our path? Does our speech reflect a sincere faith when we are not around other believers?

May God help us to be aware of any habitual tradition we have developed to satisfy our pride but has caused the sword of His Word to become dull in our lives. With confidence and full trust in its commands let us shine for Him while hiding in His shadow.

J. Ekis