

Understanding Spiritual Warfare

One of the most misunderstood subjects in the whole of Christian theology and teaching is the subject of spiritual warfare. Oftentimes when topics like this are discussed, well, it can have a tendency to get a little weird. People can get strange, leaders can get strange and church gatherings can get strange. So then, many times, rather than taking these important topics head-on, Bible preachers and teachers will avoid them all together.

When this occurs, we do great harm to those within the body of Christ who desperately need to be empowered, impacted and prepared for spiritual battle. Hell's spells are in full effect when the church ignores the reality of spiritual warfare. We will never win a war we refuse to acknowledge.

There is no need to sensationalize spiritual warfare, because it's already sensational! The fact that there is a world that exists beyond this world is sensational, don't you think? A world in the spirit realm that is every bit as real as the world you and I live in and understand right now? A world filled with angels, demons, a devil, and an almighty God? That's amazing!

What I have often seen in many Christian circles, however, are manipulations and misunderstandings as it relates to this subject. I have witnessed this teaching sensationalized in such a way as to provoke public interest and excitement at the expense of biblical accuracy. All teaching and revelation on this subject must rest on the firm foundation of biblical truth. Anything else is inaccurate and will lead us to trouble and often to fear.

And as born-again believers, we have nothing to fear! The only

way for a believer to lose in spiritual warfare is to refuse to fight. And when you finally make up your mind to fight, it's of the utmost importance to know your foe.

The first key to victory in spiritual warfare is this: You must believe in the spirit realm. You must believe this realm is real and tangible. The spirit realm is not some made-up fairy tale that lives only in the minds of children and the superstitious, but it is real. In other words, you must believe that what you see isn't all there is. You must believe and acknowledge that there is more.

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Spiritual warfare is something that takes place every day. It is going on 24 hours a day, and it is happening whether we realize it or not. Just because we ignore something doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Many people suffer from the sickness of "ostrichitus."

They think if they act like an ostrich about things like spiritual warfare, then it's not happening. They may stick their head in the sand and ignore it, but it's still occurring! Are you suffering from ostrichitus?

One of the greatest and most respected voices in modern Christianity believes in spiritual warfare. Billy Graham explains the reality of spiritual warfare in his book *Angels*. He describes this spiritual struggle as a war that began in the heart of Lucifer himself.

There is incredible spiritual warfare that takes place with unrelenting relentlessness. Wherever God is at work, satanic forces are as well. The powers of hell seek to sabotage and destroy God's plan and agenda for every man, woman, boy, and girl on Planet Earth.

Since his fall from heaven, Lucifer has not let up. He is the

master of deceit, and he and his demonic forces do all they can to enforce satanic rule.

The devil is serious about spiritual warfare, and we must be as well. Satan is more desperate, determined, and fiercer than he has ever been. As we race toward the end of the age, he sees and knows firsthand the victory of the cross of Jesus Christ. There must be no doubt, this is war. "Be vigilant; because your adversary the devil ... " (1 Pet. 5:8).

Adversary is a warrior's term. Satan is desperately fighting to destroy you, your destiny, your purpose and your family. But do not be overcome or dismayed. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are a winner!

You may be thinking, "Thank you for telling me this, because I surely don't feel like a winner!" It's kind of like the boxer who was fighting a powerful opponent. He was getting beaten up pretty badly. His nose was bloody and broken, his lips were wounded and bleeding, and his eye was swollen shut. The bell rang, and he went to his corner and his trainer said, "You're doing great; he's not even laying a hand on you!" The struggling boxer looked at his trainer out of his one good eye and replied, "Well, then, you better keep your eye on that referee, because somebody in there is about to beat me to death!" We have all been in that place, haven't we? There have been times when we felt like we were losing horribly in our spiritual fight. You may be in that situation right now, but I want to encourage you. Your outcome is already in place. As you trust in the Lord, you will win—and you are winning!

Before we can grasp what spiritual warfare is, we must acknowledge what it is not. Unfortunately, in much of the church realm today, we have not gotten a clear picture of spiritual warfare. Let me make something very clear: Spiritual warfare is not shouting, screaming or hollering. It's not raising the volume of your voice and threatening the devil. If you really have power, you can whisper and demons will

tremble. I am not saying that there is one thing wrong with passion and emotion, but none of this is spiritual warfare. "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Paul declares here that there is a world that is not seen. This is a supernatural world, and in this unseen world is where spiritual warfare occurs. From the very beginning of time there has been a blurry line between the natural world and the spiritual world. At the dawn of creation, when Adam and Eve arrived in the Garden of Eden, Satan did too, and spiritual warfare began.

This struggle is called war because Satan and all of hell are in total rebellion to God. Spiritual warfare can manifest in many different ways. When we are tempted to participate in sin and unrighteous behavior, the fight is on. It occurs when we are wounded, hurt or disappointed by those we love or have confidence in. It's a spiritual fight not to become bitter, angry and unforgiving. The enemy will orchestrate situations that are engineered to defeat us, and it can become a struggle to remain victorious, joyful and even saved!

Spiritual warfare can take place anywhere—at home, at work and even at church! Never forget: The devil has been known to go to church. Now, it's important that you understand this truth: There is great spiritual warfare occurring at this very moment. You might be wondering if God is worried, and that answer would be a resounding no. God is in total control and is in no danger from Satan at all.

We are engaged in war, the stakes are enormous and our enemy is Satan. Our enemy is God's enemy, and that enemy is Satan. In order for you to overcome an enemy, it is of utmost importance to know your foe. When you know your foe, you are on the path to certain victory.

Satan is not a wicked god who is the evil version of Jehovah God. He wants you to think he is, but don't give him that kind of credit. He is not God at all; he is a fallen angel. Satan is a created being.

God, on the other hand, was never created; He is Creator. He has always been and will always be. He is all powerful and has no limitations. That's one of the things that make Him God. In contrast, Satan is not all powerful, and he has limitations. There is tremendous advantage gained by the believer who recognizes and exploits the weaknesses of the devil.

Be confident and courageous as you gain understanding; all of heaven is on your side!

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