

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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**R**emember that old newsreel that shows President Franklin Roosevelt addressing Congress the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941?

Talking about “a day that will live in infamy,” the president declared that in reality, America was already at war. Roosevelt just needed a declaration of Congress to make it official.

I am not the president, but I have a declaration to make: You and I are at war! In fact, we are engaged right now in the mother of all battles. No war in history can compare with the battle you and I are fighting. It can be the cause of either your greatest joy as a Christian or your deepest pain.

## THE AGENDA IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The war I am talking about is the spiritual warfare

that you became a part of the day you received Jesus Christ as your Savior. This war affects every area of your life. There is no way you can avoid the conflict. There is no bunker or foxhole you can crawl into that will shield you from the effects of this cosmic battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan.

You may not even know you're at war. A lot of Christians don't. But other people can see the results of the battle in those people's lives, because they have become casualties of spiritual warfare.

Some Christians are emotional casualties of spiritual warfare. They are discouraged, depressed, down-trodden, and defeated. Others are marital and family casualties. Divorce, conflict, and abuse are some of the "battle scars" these believers bear.

Still others have been wounded morally in the battle. They cannot control their passions, or they make poor moral choices. For some Christians, the wounds have been inflicted on their finances. They are losing the financial battle because they are losing the spiritual battle. It's not just a matter of how they use their credit cards.

Since we are all at war, and since there is so much at stake both here on earth and in eternity, we'd better find out what spiritual warfare is all about and how to fight the battle successfully. That's what I want to help you do in this book.

## The Essence of the Battle

Let me begin by stating the obvious. The essence of

our warfare is spiritual. Because of this, the degree to which we will be successful is the degree to which we are prepared to understand and fight this battle on a spiritual level.

Perhaps a definition will help at this point. Spiritual warfare is that conflict being waged in the invisible, spiritual realm that is being manifest in the visible, physical realm.

In other words, spiritual warfare is a battle between invisible, angelic forces that affects you and me. The cause of the war is something you and I can't see. But the effects are very visible in the kinds of problems I mentioned above, and in the day-to-day stuff you and I face all the time.

It's hard enough to fight an enemy you can see. It's much harder to fight someone you can't see. That is exactly the kind of enemy we face. Paul wrote, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

This verse identifies the enemy: Satan and his demons. That means we are making a grand mistake if we think people are the real enemy. People can be bad, no doubt. But they are merely conduits for this greater battle. Satan has been very successful in getting us to fight people, rather than fighting that which is causing people to be the way they are.

Let me set down a foundational principle for spiritual warfare. Everything we see in the physical realm is

either caused, influenced, or provoked by something in the spiritual realm. Your five senses are not the limit of reality.

Daniel 4:32 states that heaven rules over all the affairs of earth. So until we address the spiritual cause of a problem, we will never fix the physical effect of that problem.

Not only are our physical senses very limited, but they are often of little help in spiritual warfare. If we are going to wage successful spiritual battle, we need a “sixth sense”—a keen awareness of the spiritual realm. In order to understand spiritual warfare, we have to address it through the lens of the spirit, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## The Impact of the Battle

Even though this battle is spiritual, it has very definite effects in the physical realm. You know you’re in a battle when you get shot and start bleeding. We are seeing the “bleeding,” the impact, of spiritual warfare in at least four areas of life today.

Many believers are seeing the wounds of spiritual warfare in their personal lives. This doesn’t mean these people are necessarily doing something really bad. It could be that they have a problem such as uncontrolled anger.

Our emotions can give the devil an entry into our lives. Paul explained the relationship between our emotions and spiritual warfare: “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and

yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity” (Ephesians 4:25–27).

Failing to control anger grants the devil an opportunity to get a foothold in your life. Then he can use it as a base of operation to launch more spiritual attacks against you.

Many Christians are suffering today because of anger that was not resolved yesterday—and anger is just one of a complex range of human emotions. If Satan can seize our emotions, he can destroy our ability to function by crippling us emotionally or leading us into all manner of destructive and addictive behavior.

Many believers are also feeling the effects of spiritual warfare in their families. The devil messed up the first family in the Garden of Eden, and we have been dealing with the effects of that sin ever since.

Here’s a specific example of family relationships and spiritual warfare. Paul wrote to husbands and wives in 1 Corinthians 7:5, “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

Paul is saying that when a husband and wife don’t have a fulfilling sexual relationship, the devil sees that lack as an opportunity to come in and bring about moral destruction in the family. So this thing of spiritual warfare gets right down to the nitty-gritty aspects of everyday life.

## The Location of the Battle

Where in the universe is this great battle called spiritual warfare being fought? Paul tells us it is “in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).

The third heaven is the throne room of God, the place we normally think of when we hear the word *heaven*. The Bible has the most to say about this heaven. In fact, heaven is a very busy place, the sphere of God’s operation.

In the book of Ephesians alone, we find numerous references to heavenly places in addition to the one above. I want to review these with you, because understanding how to tap into the heavenly places is crucial to spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 1:3 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” God resides in the heavenly places, and so do *all* of our spiritual blessings.

This is important because if you are engaged in a spiritual battle and need help to win, the help you need is with God the Father, who is in the heavenly places. But if you don’t know how to get to heavenly places, you won’t know how to get to the heavenly help you need to win the battle in earthly places.

According to Ephesians 1:20, when God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead, He seated His Son “at His right hand in the heavenly places.” Not only are the Father and your blessings in heavenly places, Jesus

Christ is there too. So if you need Christ's help in earthly places, you'd better know where He is hanging out and how to take a trip there to obtain His help in your warfare.

But it gets even better. God also "raised us up with [Christ], and seated us with Him in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6). Do you get the picture here? You and I as believers are also in heavenly places.

You may say, "Wait a minute, I'm here on earth. I'm in a physical place." But that's a problem. If you only see where you are physically and never understand where you're supposed to be spiritually, you'll never be able to win in spiritual warfare.

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*Satan is a limited being.*

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Paul is saying that when you accepted Christ, you were transported to another sphere. Even though your body is limited to earth, your spirit that should be controlling your body is operating in a wholly different realm.

What else is in heavenly places? Spiritual rulers and authorities (see Ephesians 3:10). These are angels. This is important for spiritual warfare, because it takes an angel to beat an angel. Remember, Satan and his demons are also "in the heavenly places" (6:12).

See, if your problem originates in the heavenly places, you need a solution that originates in the heavenly places. Most of us have very little consciousness of angels because they're not part of our physical world. But we need to understand that the angels of God and the demons of hell are the "foot soldiers" in the cosmic battle between God and Satan.

When you hear believers say they are being attacked by the devil, they probably mean they are being harassed by his foot soldiers. Satan is a limited being. He is not everywhere present, all-knowing, and all-powerful like God.

But Satan does have a whole host of evil angels called demons he can use for spiritual attacks. So anything that hell can bring against you is the result of satanic activity in the same realm in which God operates, called heavenly places.

You and I are no match for the power and deceptiveness of Satan and his army. We need the power of God to neutralize and destroy the power of Satan.

But if you need divine help and don't yet have a "heavenly places" mind-set, you won't know how to get the help you need at the time you need it. Since everything related to our warfare is in the spiritual realm, we need to know how to reach into the heavenly places for help. That's where the action is.

The good news is, you can take a trip to heaven any time you feel like it—because spiritually, you're already there. You are seated with Christ in heavenly places.

Some years ago, my wife Lois and I were in Lon-