

# Reflections on Spiritual Warfare

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Life with God is wonderful – and I have come to better understand the progressive revelation of God and His plan for the restoration of humanity... it is the desire of God to bring humanity back to living in His Presence as volitional creations walking in innocent dependence and intimacy with God. When you stop and think about it, and study the Scriptures you have to conclude that it is truly amazing! The battle over humanity by the powers of light and dark is the backdrop for the fall. This is the story behind the story and may provide an insight as to why God was compelled to act as He did. The most amazing part is God coming to earth to rectify the matter in the Person of Jesus the Messiah.

The book I read is Spiritual Warfare by Dean Sherman; 1990, 1995, 2001 – Youth With A Mission Publishing.

## Notes/Thought/Reflections:

### A. Background:

1. The angelic host was under the direction of 3 Archangels who served in the Presence of God. They had no authority other than to observe and carry out God's Will:
  - a. Michael – the warrior angel
  - b. Gabriel – the messenger angel
  - c. Lucifer – the worship angel
2. In creating man, God imbued humanity with elements of God's Image [Imago Dei] – and gave him authority over earth to care for it in God's service.
3. The nature of the fall had to do with Lucifer's desire to be as God – having a kingdom of his own. Lucifer couldn't overcome God and take the Kingdom of Heaven, but he did subvert and usurp man's authority – thus claiming the kingdom of earth. As such, Lucifer [renamed Satan – name & identity are caught up together] now exerts man's rightful authority on earth.
4. Spiritual warfare has as its basis the struggle to throw off Satan's influence and reclaim our birthright – our authority to rule earth in God's Name.
5. Satan's hatred of humanity has continued in the subversion of God's Plan for a remnant of chosen people who would give rise to Messiah and restore the rightful order.
  - a. Messiah accomplished spiritual redemption at His 1<sup>st</sup> coming.
  - b. Messiah will accomplish physical redemption at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
6. Humanity continues to live in the tension between the two Comings... what we have now is grace and the power of the Spirit, what we await is the new heaven and earth when humanity and God will live together.
7. Jesus came as man to accomplish God's purpose:
  - a. To atone for Sin.

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- b. To establish the ability to reject temptation
  - c. Set the captives free on earth and in Hades
  - d. To take back what the 1<sup>st</sup> man foolishly gave away – his birthright [reminiscent of Esau & Jacob]
  - e. To legally break Satan’s hold on humanity, taking away the keys to death and Hades.
  - f. To re-establish the authority of man over the kingdom of earth, and provide humanity access into the Kingdom of Heaven [Lk 10:19].
  - g. To fulfill the Gen 3 prophecy that Satan would bruise man’s heel making them less than they were intended [a wounding]; and that Messiah [the seed of man] would ultimately triumph over Satan by crushing his head – taking away his power and authority [a mortal wounding]. This is the basis for spiritual warfare!
  - h. To deliver man from the kingdom of darkness [Satan’s domain], into the Kingdom of Light [God’s Domain]. Humanity must exist in one place or the other.
  - i. To enable man to live as children of Light – even though we continue to live in an imperfect and as yet unredeemed physical existence [1 John 4:4].
  - j. To enable us to be perfected in the spirit as we live out an imperfect physical existence [Philip 1:6].
  - k. In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us [Rom 8:35-39].
8. Why does evil exist?
- a. Evil **results** from choices –
    - i. Satan 1<sup>st</sup> chose to disobey God and actively and knowingly subverting God’s intended order.
    - ii. Humanity then chose to believe Satan’s lies and disobey God.
    - iii. When you consider the possibility for error by multiplying the number of choices by the number of people you wind up with an exponential error growth factor.
  - b. Evil **exists because** of free will. But free will is infinitely more valuable in God’s economy than the absence of evil.
    - i. Free will is the basis of personal choice, personal responsibility, and personal intimacy.
    - ii. Without free will humanity is no more than automatons – beings living out life scripted by God with no will, no volition, and no individuality. This is something that is completely reprehensible to God, but totally satisfactory to Satan.
9. Wilderness experiences are crucial for God’s people...
- a. It is there where we are forced to get real with God and confront ourselves.
  - b. Where we learn humility and what is really in our hearts as we are tested.
  - c. It is where our character is developed and revealed as we deal with trials and adversity.
  - d. It is there we learn to persevere.
- B. True Spirituality:
10. Being human in a physical world, we live out a spiritual life in a physical existence:
- a. Spiritual growth develops when we realize that:

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- i. “No temptation has overcome you but such as is common to man” [1 Cor 10:13] – there is great comfort knowing it is not about us, that temptation is a nasty case of the normals, but we don’t have to acquiesce in sin.
  - ii. “Nothing new under the sun” [Ec 1:9] – the great new frontier is not on earth, but in heaven – and this should be our real goal and objective.
  - iii. “Consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive in Christ Jesus... for you are not under law, but under grace” [Rom 6:11-14] – without Jesus we are walking corpses being spiritually dead, when we are made alive in the spirit we can choose to become dead to sin and live a life pleasing to God. Thus sin loses its hold on us.
  - iv. We are already perfected in our spirit through the Presence of the Holy Spirit, but we continue to live out a life in an imperfect world that won’t be perfected until the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Until we get to heaven, God’s Spirit will always be transforming us, prompting us to change our thinking, our attitude, our motives, and our actions.
  - v. With the Power of the Holy Spirit we are being **progressively transformed** in our nature – becoming more like Jesus. This is authentic discipleship.
- b. Spiritual attacks occur through a number of factors... including [1 Cor 12:10]:
- i. Infirmities – this is a physical attack than may be caused by common germs, by our physical abuse, and supernaturally.
  - ii. Reproaches – this is where faith, leadership, and specific individuals are made to look bad publicly.
  - iii. Distresses – persistent attacks to undermine our confidence or faith.
  - iv. Persecutions – persistent attacks by authorities to prevent the advance of the gospel or our personal growth.
  - v. Difficulties – obstacles to acquiring means or requirements to advance the Kingdom of God.

### 11. Mature Christianity demands an appropriate response to evil:

- a. It begins with knowing what God has done for you, and knowing who you are in Christ Jesus.
- b. It continues by accepting our responsibility to advance the Kingdom of God – we are to purposely identify with God’s Purpose [Missio Dei] and stand our ground in His Name.
- c. Spiritual Comparison in scripture:

<u>Old Testament/Old Covenant</u>	<u>New Testament/New Covenant</u>
i. Delivery from slavery in Egypt	Delivery from slavery to sin
ii. Passing through the Red Sea	Baptism in repentance & Spirit
iii. Wilderness tempting and testing	Wilderness tempting and testing
iv. Faith strengthened and purified	Faith strengthened and purified
v. Prepared for warfare and promised land	Prepared for warfare and promised land
- d. Prayer is communion with God – it is intimacy with Him... where we open our hearts and ask for His counsel and blessing, we listen for Him, hear His encouragement, and obey His council and

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direction.

- i. <sup>Phil 4:4-7</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- ii. Petition prayers are requests made to God. Supplications are continuous/ongoing petitions that remain in our mind and heart before Him.
- iii. Prayers of thanksgiving acknowledge with faith and appreciation that God is working in us, through us, and for us.
- iv. Intercession [or entreaties] are prayers on behalf of others – it is coming between two things, standing in the gap, as an advocate for someone or an adversary against someone.
- a. Jesus charge to Peter/the church and its leaders: You are Peter – upon this rock **I** will build **My** church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I give to you the keys to the Kingdom, what you loose on earth is loosed in heaven, what is bound on earth is bound in heaven – (Mat 16:18-19).
  - v. Gates are a defensive measure, not an offensive one. Some people interpret this to mean that the church should be assailing hell. This doesn't seem likely especially since we can't even defend our own turf! Lord God – give me/your people a renewed vision of our role in Your Kingdom.
  - vi. Presuming loosing and binding are also for the church, what's wrong? We don't seem to be prevailing! So just what are we/should we be binding and loosing? Lord God – enable me/your people to answer Your call and Honor You and Your trust in us.
  - vii. "Binding" is like a wrestler move – it is holding your opponent and preventing them from acting. We have authority to bind the adversary by prayer.
  - viii. "Loosing" is like calling in the reinforcements or heavy artillery. God has created legions of angels who are ready to deploy when we prayerfully intercede.
  - ix. Intercession is seeing evil or injustice and agreeing in our spirit with the Spirit of God and coming against it, it is prayer in action.
  - x. Thanksgiving is seeing the good in God's Character or Nature as manifested on earth or creation, and praising God for it.
  - xi. The church and individual believers are God's ordained agents on earth – the King has given us a role to play and we need to get busy with it.
  - xii. Jesus gave His disciples a command and a commission:
    1. The great commandment (Mat 22:37-40) – to love God with all our heart, all our strength, and all our might; and to love our neighbors as ourselves.
    2. The great commission – to go [evangelize] and make disciples of all the nations...

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- teaching them [discipleship] to obey everything I taught you.
- xiii. Praying continually is keeping our hearts and minds aligned with God and responding prayerfully throughout our day – while we walk purposefully with God.
1. As our mind and heart are conformed to God’s Spirit we commune continually through the Spirit.
  2. In this communing state, wherever we go we are God’s ambassadors through whom He can work and bless.
  3. Man’s sin in the garden was passively standing by while Eve was being tempted. Adam was there and he could have/should have intervened. Passivity is still our sin, one that the adversary is counting on continuing.
  4. Prayer is not a passive act... it is standing and being counted... it is choosing God.
- xiv. The “Lord’s Prayer” is not a mantra to be repeated, but a model to be emulated of intercession & thanksgiving, it is a model establishing our priorities in prayer:
1. Thy Kingdom come – within me as well as on earth and in heaven.
  2. Thy Will be done – within me as well as on earth and in heaven.
  3. God chooses to act in the affairs of men – through men. We don’t have because we don’t ask. We don’t receive because we don’t believe. The problem is a deficiency in our identity as God’s child and His people and in our faith.
- xv. God expects us to be His watchmen [Is 62:6-7], and to be bold and persistent [Mat 15:22-23; Lk 11:5-9, 18:1-8; Mk 10:46-52].

### 12. Spiritual Warfare

- a. ***It is not*** about a prayer prayed or a demon rebuked – ***it is*** a life lived in the Light of the Spirit.
- b. Everything we do either aids the forces of Light – or of darkness.
- c. Messiah has defeated the devil – but the forces of darkness are effective only to the degree that people are sinning, promoting sin, and acting selfishly. People don’t necessarily have to deliberately align themselves with evil for evil to pervade... all we need do is to passively do nothing.
- d. Man ***is not*** intended to be a passive bystander in the struggle between good/Light and evil/darkness – God has delegated responsibility and authority to us as His People... His Children. He expects us to act on His behalf as we are called and enabled to stand.
- e. Walking in obedience to and dependence upon God is the precursor of an effective ministry. We are expected to prepare ourselves for ministry by diligent study, disciplined thinking and behavior, and wise planning and action. Just throwing yourself in front of a train expecting God to rescue you is foolish. God gave us a brain and He expects us to use it!
- f. We are called to become Watchmen for God over people, cities, regions, and countries – God can and will curtail evil influences when His righteous people stand by faith in the gap.
- g. Adversity is a part of life in a fallen world – and no one is exempt! It is naive and/or foolish to think otherwise. Faith is trusting God in the midst of calamity – to be able to say with

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confidence as did King David “though every bone be broken yet I will rejoice in the Lord.”

- h. God could remove us from this fallen world as soon as we respond in faith to His Calling – but He chose instead to leave us to be Spiritual Warriors. We are to be Kingdom Fighters – in prayer not in physical violence.
- i. Fasting has a role in spiritual warfare –
  - i. To discipline ourselves
  - ii. To weaken the forces of spiritual oppression
  - iii. To heighten and focus our spiritual sensitivity
- j. Giving has a role in spiritual warfare –
  - i. God is not concerned about how much you have – but He is concerned as to whether the needs of others truly grips your heart. The world loves wealth – wealth is not bad, but the love and dependence upon it is bad. When we give faithfully it breaks the hold of darkness on us.
  - ii. Give as a form of worship.
  - iii. Give in obedience.
  - iv. Give strategically – have a plan to maximize your impact for the things important to God – social justice, evangelism, and discipleship are critical elements.
- k. Unity of believers has a role in Spiritual Warfare –
  - i. Satan hates unity – that’s why he sows division and dissension.
  - ii. When we humble ourselves and seek unity in the Spirit – God’s power is not only manifest but also multiplied exponentially... and the heavenly host that surrounds us joins in to make it all the more impactful.
  - iii. It is not by accident that we are repeatedly called to love and unity – it demonstrates God’s Presence because it is counter cultural to humanities natural tendencies.
- l. The use of Spiritual gifts has a role in spiritual warfare –
  - i. The Holy Spirit flows from the inmost being of believers – like a River of Life.
  - ii. Praying in the Spirit drives back the darkness and brings Light.
  - iii. 1 Cor 12 speaks to the equipping of all believers – past, present, and future – until Jesus returns.
- m. Serving others has a role in Spiritual Warfare –
  - i. The enemy seeks to steal hope, faith, and love – and to crush hearts and promote despair. He seeks to de-humanize individuals and to numb our hearts to the need of others... serving humanity in humility breaks this hold.
  - ii. This is not merely ‘social justice’ – but Spiritual Obedience.
- n. Knowing Scripture, walking with God and exercising faith has a role in spiritual warfare –
  - i. Faith is based on the ‘Rhema’ – the specific and quickened Word of God to us at a particular time, and the Character of God as revealed in the ‘Logos’ – the written Word of God written in our mind and heart.

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- ii. Acts of obedience strengthen faith... saying yes to God and no to sin is faith in action.
- iii. Faith overcomes the world – 1 John 5:4. We need to be a people wholly dependent upon God – who seek His Word, who listen for and hear His Voice, and wait for Him to bring Revelation [Rhema] so we may properly act in concert with Him.
- iv. Darkness thrives on ignorance, unbelief, and fear – it is destroyed by Light.
- v. Light thrives on knowledge, belief, and love – and darkness has no power over it.
- vi. In the end... you are either drawn to Love or driven by fear... how do you normally respond?
- vii. A “normative church experience” lends itself to producing a false comfort zone – where Christian traditions are maintained and our passion for God and our use for His Kingdom purpose diminishes.
- o. Praise has a role in Spiritual Warfare –
  - i. Effective praise is much more than mere singing – it is expression that is joyful, involves the heart and mind, it is experiential, it is exuberance and confidence – all welling up together.
  - ii. It is worship in Spirit and in Truth, and it absolutely shatters the enemy’s hold.
  - iii. Praise is the joyful proclamation of the Great Nature and Character of God – it is experiential faith.
  - iv. God is Personal, and a personal relationship with Him is the desired goal of Christian experience – worship, praise, teaching, and study are but means to this end.
  - v. Worship and teaching the Word of God are high forms of Spiritual Warfare.
- p. Persevering, enduring, and finishing have a role in spiritual warfare –
  - i. It is far too easy for us to quit –
    1. As leaders
    2. On relationships
    3. On churches
    4. On the work God has provided
  - ii. Spiritual warfare is a life lived well –
    1. Embracing the Truth
    2. Holding onto the Promise
    3. Aware of the adversary
    4. Fully committed to God
  - iii. To be a Spiritual warrior is to walk consistently and victoriously through life – with Jesus the Messiah at our side in the Power of the Spirit.