

## Definition of Spiritual Warfare

“Spiritual warfare is a way of characterizing our common struggle as Christians.”  
Clinton E. Arnold

The term “spiritual warfare” is used in these studies as “...a way of characterizing our common struggle as Christians” (Arnold, p. 27). Every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is a member of His kingdom of light, and therefore faces supernatural opposition from the devil and his kingdom of darkness (Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 1:13-14). We are not limiting “spiritual warfare” to casting out demons and interceding for those undergoing severe persecution for the sake of the gospel. Any opposition to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ is part of the cosmic battle between good and evil, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Any temptation to deny Jesus, to doubt His truth, to participate in patterns of ungodliness, or to align ourselves with the powers of darkness is a battleground for Christians. All areas of life can be a scene of conflict with those who want to demote Christ, deny the spread of the gospel, destroy the church, and bring about the demise of individual believers. False accusations, false teaching, severe adversity, and other attempts to lure us from the intimate relationship we share with God and His people are part of Satan’s strategy to war against the Lord and His kingdom. And apart from Christ dwelling in us and empowering us with His Holy Spirit, we cannot stand our ground and experience victory in these battles. Our goal in these studies is to give practical help in resisting or overcoming evil on a daily basis, rather than exhaustively examining every aspect of the topic. We recommend *Power Healing*, Chapter 6, “Healing the Demonized” (Wimber and Springer) as a good introduction. We also recommend classes and tapes available through Vineyard Columbus for further instruction and practical experience.

As background to our view of spiritual warfare, it’s important to understand how we view the two kingdoms that are in conflict. When Jesus began His public ministry, He announced “the good news of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43). By “kingdom,” He didn’t mean a geographical or political territory but rather the blessed condition of anything under the absolute dominion of Almighty God. Jesus did not invent this concept. It had been a long-awaited vision, announced by the Old Testament prophets who spoke of the future fulfillment of all God’s promises to those who were in a loving and obedient relationship with Him (Is. 2:1-5; Is. 9:6-7 where *counselor* refers to a king; Is. 11; Mic. 4:1-8). In opposition to the beneficial reign of God is the kingdom of darkness, comprised of Satan and his demons. Whether Jesus encounters Satan directly or engages in conflict with demons, Scripture portrays Jesus viewing them as a unified enemy. When Jesus casts out a demon, He demonstrates the power of God’s kingdom triumphing over the devil’s (Page, pp. 102-106). While Jesus did not completely defeat Satan in the wilderness temptation (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark. 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13), Jesus did deal such a significant blow to the powers of darkness that He was able to liberate people from

demonic influence before His death and resurrection (*op. cit.*, pp. 106-109). Prior to the cross, Jesus indicated that Satan had been found guilty and condemned to destruction (John 12:31-32; John 16:11). And, although Jesus gained a decisive victory over Satan at the cross, the opposition to Jesus and His followers by Satan and his demons has not ended (Page, p. 215). Jesus indicated that Christians would experience spiritual warfare; in His prayer on the night He was betrayed, He asked His Father to protect His followers from “the evil one” (John 17:15). He also spoke about the trouble we would have in the world (John 16:33). While we continue to face spiritual battles, we have several truths to comfort us: Jesus’ prayer will keep us safe; Satan and his forces are limited in what they can do to us; the gospel can be proclaimed to liberate people from darkness (Acts 26:18); and Satan and his kingdom will be destroyed ultimately (Page, pp.129-131).

Inevitably, someone will ask the question whether or not a Christian can be demon possessed. In our view, the phrase “demon possession” does not accurately convey the meaning of the Greek word used in the New Testament. There is no word indicating possession or ownership in the Greek texts. Instead, the word *daimonizomai*, might be better translated “demonized” to refer to the influence of demonic powers. This can help rephrase the question about whether a Christian can be possessed by a demon, to “Can Christians come under a high degree of influence by a demonic spirit?” (Arnold, pp.78-80). Some New Testament scriptures imply that this can happen but most texts are warnings to believers to not let themselves be influenced by evil (Acts 5:3; Eph. 4:26-27; 1 Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:14-16). It’s important to note that in the Gospels, we generally read of Jesus freeing demonized individuals who are victims of demonic problems rather than people who have brought spiritual bondage on themselves (Garland, p.70; Page, p. 77). Sometimes that is true in people’s lives today (Wimber and Springer, pp. 118-120). But for those who have been born again of the Spirit of God, Scripture does not excuse our falling into sin because ‘the devil made me do it’ (Arnold, p. 27). We are responsible, moral beings and we can overcome the powers of darkness as we remain in union with Christ and use the means He provides for our victory (Page, pp. 189-190).

Finally, we want to clarify how we attempt to battle powers of evil. We believe that “the battle is God’s” (2 Chron. 20:16). We rely on His authority (sovereign rule), His almighty power, and the weapons He provides (Eph. 6:10-18) including Jesus’ work on our behalf to liberate us from sin and death (Rom. 8:2). Since we are representatives of God’s kingdom and Jesus’ disciples, we follow the patterns of warfare modeled for us in Scripture. Because Jesus cast or drove demons out from individuals, and since He gave this authority to His followers (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1-2; Matt. 28:20), we believe we can do the same.

However, we do not endorse the practices of engaging in Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare (SLSW; identifying and battling spirits over territories) that grew out of the 1989 Lausanne II Conference. Although other believers may practice this, we do not see any Biblical precedent for it. Even Daniel did not take on “the prince of Persia” but relied on God’s heavenly army (Dan. 12:1). And we do not believe other passages

that might be interpreted to support SLSW (e.g., Jude 8-10; 2 Pet. 2:10-11) call us to engage in this kind of spiritual warfare (M. Nathan, pp. 3-4).

We also do not practice “rebuking” or “binding” Satan, because we do not find any command to do so nor do we see Jesus’ disciples fighting this way either. [Perhaps the habit of “rebuking” or “binding” Satan came from taking Jesus’ parable literally about “binding the strong man” (RSV) in Matt. 12:29 and parallel passages.] Instead, we ask for the Lord to protect and deliver us from Satan (Matt. 6:13), leaving direct confrontation with the devil to the Lord Himself. As followers of Christ, we don’t want to give inordinate attention to the enemy and his dark forces. Rather, we want to focus our attention and efforts on living as children of light, finding out what would please our Heavenly Father (Eph. 5:8-10); resisting the devil and his deceitful schemes (Jas. 4:7); and by God’s grace, standing our ground together when we are attacked (Eph. 6:10-14).

When we are praying for others and demons manifest, we want to follow Jesus’ example (Mark 1:23-26; Mark 5:1-15; Mark 9:17-19). Because Jesus did nothing except what the Father showed Him (John 5:19,20, 30), we turn in faith to God and acknowledge our dependence on Him. We may ask the person to put their faith in Jesus Christ and renounce any allegiance to the powers of evil. We accept our authority as God’s kingdom representative, command the demon(s) to be silent, to leave the person, and to not return. We then pray cleansing, infilling by the Holy Spirit, and protection from evil forces for both the person receiving prayer and the prayer team. [Again, you can find further help in learning to pray for those affected by the powers of darkness in *Power Healing* and Vineyard Columbus’ training and tapes.]

## **Bibliography**

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