

Spiritual Warfare A Biblical Critique

I. Spiritual Warfare

The concept of Spiritual Warfare has become one of the main areas of attention in modern times. Fueled by the popular books by Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing The Darkness*, many have concluded that believers are engaged in an invisible war with highly organized legions of demons. They have come to the conclusion that demons are in control of major nations, cities, and governmental institutions. As a result, many believers are looking to a new breed of warrior, the “Spiritual Warfare Specialist,” to help them understand the enemy and how to meet him. Because of the popularity of this movement, it is necessary to subject it to close examination in light of the Scriptures, and see what is really true, and what is false.

In the following discussion, it is assumed that when we talk about Satan we are not only referring to him as an individual, but as the head of the demonic forces opposed to God.

A. What We Are Told

1. Satan is the major cause of all physical disease and lack of blessings for believers. In many circles the path to healing is taught to be the process of identifying and casting out the demons of disease (although many would just say that one of the major causes of disease is demonic oppression).

The Hunters [Charles and Frances] provides a case in point: “When a doctor says there is no cure, our spiritual antennas pick up the fact that it is a spirit.” They have concluded that all incurable diseases are caused by evil spirits. Demons inhabit not only people, but also homes, cars, and other mechanical devices. This produces great consternation for the believer who wants to experience blessings promised to him (Ken L. Sarles, “A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 [Oct.-Dec. 1986]:336, 344-45).

2. The world is under the control of territorial demons. Each nation, region, city, and town has its own demon in charge of demonic activity in that area. It is not possible to successfully fight these demons unless one knows of their existence and name (Dean Sherman, *Spiritual Warfare for Every Christian*, pp. 87ff). Note the following quote taken from the *Los Angeles Times*:

Under the militant banner of “spiritual warfare,” growing numbers of evangelical and charismatic Christian leaders are preparing broad assaults on what they call the cosmic powers of darkness.

Fascinated with the notion that Satan commands a hierarchy of territorial demons, some mission agencies and big-church pastors are devising strategies for “breaking the strongholds” of those evil spirits alleged to be controlling cities and countries.

Some proponents in the fledgling movement already maintain that focused prayer meetings have ended the curse of the Bermuda triangle, led to the 1987 downfall in Oregon of the free-love guru Baghwan Shree Rajneesh, and for the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, produced a two-week drop in the crime rate, a friendly atmosphere and unclogged freeways.

This is not the cinematic story line for a religious sequel to “Ghostbusters II,” yet the developing scenario does have a fictional influence: interest in spiritual warfare has been heightened by two best-selling novels in Christian bookstores. “This Present Darkness” by Frank Peretti, describes the religious fight against “territorial spirits mobilized to dominate a small town.” A second Peretti novel has a similar premise.

Fuller Seminary Prof. C. Peter Wagner, who has written extensively on the subject, led a “summit” meeting on cosmic-level spiritual warfare Monday in Pasadena with two dozen men and women, including a Texas couple heading a group called the “Generals of Intercession” and an Oregon man who conducts “spiritual warfare bootcamps” (John Dart, “Evangelicals, Charismatics Prepare for Spiritual Warfare,” 17 February 1990, F16).

3. The way to overcome Satan is by power encounters. These are miraculous and often spectacular encounters between good and evil, God and Satan. Some say that without these power encounters the gospel message itself is ineffective in leading men to salvation. Mark Bubeck, an evangelical writer relates this experience:

I often found myself crying out to God for revival during extended sessions of prayer. In the midst of one such prayer session an unusual, strong spiritual awareness suddenly overwhelmed me. I don't know how else to describe it. Although I did not hear a voice, there was a powerful communication to my spirit: *Before a revival like the one for which you are praying can come, there will have to be a strong encounter with Satan* (Mark Bubeck, *The Satanic Revival* [San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life, 1991], p. 11).

4. Christians are to take the offensive against Satan. We should seek out and engage the enemy face to face. Just as Christ delivered men from the power of Satan, so should we deliver men from demonic oppression. (James Robison, *Winning The Real War*, pp. 115ff).
5. Homes that we move into may be infested with demons because of some occult activity years and years before. The sensitive believer can recognize and exorcise these demons through the power of the Word and Christ (Thomas B. White, *The Believers Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, pp. 90ff).
6. We may be the victims of generational curses. Sins that our forefathers engaged in may be specifically energized by Satan. This means that it is possible for us to be victimized by demonic forces in many areas of our lives without our knowledge or permission (Thomas B. White, *The Believers Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, pp. 81ff).
7. Christians can be “forced” to sin by demonic oppression. Jimmy Swaggart was exorcised of the demons of lust by Oral Roberts over the phone. This removes the responsibility for sin from us and places it on demons.
8. Specific sins are energized by demons who specialize in that area. For example, we are introduced to the demons of lust, greed, homosexuality, hate, murder, stealing, and every other vice that victimizes men by many leaders in the spiritual warfare movement.

Who needs deliverance? Anyone in the lineage of Adam has inherited the iniquity (ungodly desire) of his father (Ex. 20:5, 6). Without deliverance by Truth this person is in bondage, unreality, deception, negativity, foolishness, sickness, and evil, and he doesn't even know it...

In deliverance we are released from the spirits and desires that twist our heart and deceive our mind. What is a “spirit?” Anger is a spirit. Irritation and self-pity are spirits. Hatred, jealousy, illness, worry, deception, arrogance, fear, rebellion, resentment, phobia, shyness, conceit, confusion, smugness, sadness, accusation, addiction, pride, cruelty, legalism, homosexuality, religiosity, complaining, lying are all names of spirits.

Every word in the dictionary that describes any kind of evil, wicked intent, or sin against God is the name of a demon or evil spirit...If at any time in your life you have ever expressed any such spirit or desire, then you still have it

hidden inside, unless you have been delivered from it (*The Truth In Deliverance* [Austin, Texas: Alpha-Omega Energies, n.d.], pp. 3-4).

9. Believers have the power to bind Satan and pray hedges of protection about themselves and loved ones. In many places this has become a common method of dealing with sins. Instead of repenting of fornication we are told to bind the demon of lust. Again, this removes the responsibility of sin from us and pins it on a demon.
10. We are encouraged to learn prayers of deliverance specifically designed to combat Satan and demons. In fact, there are whole books given over to specific prayers that one can “fill in the blanks” and use (Thomas B. White, *The Believers Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, pp. 113ff).

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of His blood, I pull down all levels of the stronghold of _____. [Choose items from the following list of areas of Satan’s strongholds that you desire to pull down and smash. You may think of other things—the list is suggestive, not exhaustive.] (Mark Bubeck, *The Satanic Revival* [San Bernardino: Here’s Life Publishers, 1991], pp. 182-84).

B. Two Errors To Avoid

When approaching the subject of Spiritual Warfare there are two extreme errors to avoid. This is best brought out in C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Screwtape Letters*:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight (*The Screwtape Letters* [New York: MacMillan, 1961], p. 3).

1. All evil is a direct result of demonic forces

This view puts a demon “behind every bush.” Whenever anything bad happens, it is directly the result of demonic activity. Whenever we sin, it is because “the Devil made me do it.” All natural disasters find their source in demonic activity. Natural results of this viewpoint are:

- a. An excessive interest in the demonic.
- b. A feeling of constant oppression.
- c. A tendency to write personal sin off as the result of a demon.
- d. A tendency to “second-guess” all bad events as to why Satan is doing them or what we can do to counter them.
- e. A tendency to attribute physical disease to Satan, and the role of the believer is to deliver people from those demons.

2. Satan is minimally involved in the evil in this world

This view minimizes the activity of Satan. Unfortunately, it directly contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture that Satan and his demons are involved in evil in this world. Natural results of this viewpoint are:

- a. A failure to recognize that Satan is indeed involved in a cosmic struggle with God.

- b. A failure to realize that bad events could be caused by Satan.
- c. A tendency to fight the Christian battle in our own strength rather than rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- d. A dulling of the realization of the battle we find ourselves in as believers.

C. What The Bible Teaches

1. Satan hinders the believer.

1 Thessalonians 2:18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

2. Satan can tempt the believer on occasions.

Luke 22:31-32 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

3. Satan deceives believers and unbelievers alike.

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

4. Satan can cause physical diseases.

Luke 13:11-17 And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Luke 9:37-43 And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

5. Satan can persecute and oppress the believer.

2 Corinthians 4:8-11 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

6. Satan's forces are highly organized.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Colossians 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

7. Satan is the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

8. Satan can be resisted by the believer in the power of God.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because [greater] is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

9. Satan is a defeated foe.

Colossians 2:15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

10. Satan perverts God's Word.

Matthew 4:4-11 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Genesis 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

11. Satan blinds the unconverted.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

12. Satan snatches away Gospel truth from those hearing it.

Matthew 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received [seed] by the way side.

13. Satan is limited by God.

Job 1:6-12 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:1-6 Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst

me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

14. Satan propogates false doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

15. Satan accuses the believer before the throne of God.

Revelation 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Zechariah 3:1 And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

16. Satan can cause natural disasters.

Job 1:19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17. Satan can demonize men, but the Scriptures do not teach that demons can indwell believers.

There is no clear example in the Bible where a demon ever inhabited or invaded a true believer. Never in the New Testament epistles are believers warned about the possibility of being inhabited by demons. Neither do we see anyone rebuking, binding, or casting demons out of a true believer. The epistles never instruct believers to cast out demons, whether from a believer or unbeliever. Christ and the apostles were the only ones who cast out demons, and in every instance the demon-possessed person was an unbeliever (John MacArthur, *How To Meet The Enemy*, p. 22).

18. God may use Satan as His instrument of divine judgment.

- a. Saul

1 Samuel 16:14 But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

- b. The Corinthian incestuous man

1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- c. Hymenaus and Alexander

1 Timothy 1:18-20 (This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

D. Satan's Origin

Isaiah 14:12-14 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

Ezekiel 28:12-17 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

E. Satan's End

Revelation 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

F. A Biblical Picture of Spiritual Warfare

We find the clearest picture of spiritual warfare in Revelation 12.

1. Who are the participants?

Revelation 12:1-3 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

- a. Satan.
- b. One-third of the angels.

1). Bound demons

Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

2). Temporarily bound demons

Revelation 9:1-3 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened

by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

3). Free demons

c. Men whom Satan used to attempt to destroy Christ.

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

2. What is the strategy?

a. Satan wants to destroy Christ

Revelation 12:4-5 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

b. Satan wants to destroy Israel.

Revelation 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred {and} threescore days.

Revelation 12:13-16 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

c. Satan wants to fight against the holy angels.

Revelation 12:7-12 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

b. Believers

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

G. Satan and the Church

1. Why does Satan attack the Church?

a. The Church is Christ's Body on the earth.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Ephesians 1:22-23 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

b. The Church is the Divinely ordained institution which is commissioned to win souls.

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

c. The Church is the repository and guardian of Divine truth.

1 Timothy 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Jude 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

d. The Church is the Divinely ordained institution through which the saints are edified for the work of the ministry.

Ephesians 4:11-13 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

e. The Church is to be an example of Christian unity and fellowship.

Ephesians 4:3-4 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Ephesians 4:14-16 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From

whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

- f. The Church is Christ's special object of love.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

- g. The Church is a special place of protection and encouragement for believers.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2. How does Satan attack the Church?

- a. Satan attacks the Church through false teaching.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

- b. Satan attacks the Church through false teachers.

Acts 20:29-32 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

2 Peter 2:1-3 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

- c. Satan attacks the Church through persecution.

Revelation 2:9-10 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

- d. Satan attacks the Church through division and gossip.

1 Timothy 5:13-15 And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan.

- e. Satan attacks the Church by causing the church to become severe and unloving.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

- f. Satan attacks the Church by causing its members to sin.

1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- g. Satan attacks the Church by sowing tares.

Matthew 13:24-30 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

H. Excesses of the Spiritual Warfare Movement - A Biblical Critique

1. The Spiritual Warfare movement is full of speculative notions regarding demonic and angelic confrontations. These notions have little if anything to do with reality. For example (using Peretti's books):
 - Holy angels seem to be made to be glorified human beings.
 - Angels come in various races.
 - The book confuses demons with the flesh and leads one to believe that the cause of sin in the lives of men is demonic.
 - Holy angels are made dependent on the prayers of men and not on God's power.
 - The heroes in the story are victorious Christians and not God.

- The story leads to a mystical view of spiritual warfare and not reality.
2. The Spiritual Warfare movement places too much emphasis on Satan as the cause for personal sin and too little emphasis on the flesh.

Although we are told in the Bible that our three major enemies are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, we must understand that without the Flesh, Satan would not be able to tempt us to sin as many think he does. Without the Flesh, the World would lose its power over the believer. Our major enemy as a Christian is our own fallenness. Throughout the New Testament Paul talks about his struggle with his Flesh, not with the World or Satan. James tells us in James 1:13-15 that it is through the flesh that we are tempted, *in and of ourselves*. We do not need Satan to be tempted to sin. Our flesh is sufficient to tempt us to do any sin. The classic passage on the power of the flesh is found in Romans 7:13-23:

Romans 7:13-23 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that {it is} good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

The struggle between sin and the believer takes the form of three woes or laments in this passage. These three laments start with "For we know" (verse 14), "For I know" (verse 18), and "I find then" (verse 21). In each of the three woes we find a condition, a proof of that condition, and a resultant struggle with that condition.

a. **Woe Number 1 - Sold Under Sin - Romans 7:14-17**

The first woe described by Paul is the fact of his own carnality. Carnality is used to refer to the fact that all believers still retain the sinful flesh from which springs all manner of evil. At first, this concept may sound like it contradicts Romans 6 in which Paul proves that we are dead to the sin principle, but in actuality it does not.

The reason for this is that although we have indeed become dead to the sin principle, we still reside in our physical bodies with all of its sinful desires and habits. Although we have been freed from the obligation to serve it, we still must say "no" whenever it makes demands on us. This is the paradox of the Christian life. Although God has given us power over the flesh, we must choose to obey God instead of the flesh. This is the struggle Paul mentions in verses 15-16. He knows what he is to do, the problem is that he does not always do it. Verse 16 states that his failure to do that which is right does not make the law bad, it just shows his own evil. The source of that evil is found in verse 17, the sin that dwells in Paul.

How can that be! Paul spent a whole chapter, (chapter 6), showing that we are dead to sin and have been freed from it's bondage to serve Christ. How can he turn around in chapter 7 and state that sin still dwells in us? The answer to this is to understand the difference between the sin principle, the new life of the believer, and the flesh.

When we were justified before God, the sin principle within us was crucified with Christ. This can be understood as the old man. ² Corinthians 5:17 specifically states that "**if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation**". In other words, the sin principle in the life of a believer has been rendered inoperative. On the other hand, anyone who is in Christ has had a new life created within them. This can be understood as the new man. Lastly, the flesh is that part of us in which the sin principle held sway and as a result is still under the influence of the what it finds natural, that is, sin.

By understanding these differences, we can understand verse 17. Paul, the new Paul created in Christ, does not nor cannot sin. However, the part of Paul consisting of his flesh can do nothing but sin. It is here where we find the struggle. It is not between and old nature and a new nature within us, instead it is between the flesh and our spirit. Perhaps this concept can be seen more clearly in the following quote from *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Ephesians*, page 164.

Why, then, do we continue to sin after we become Christians? As Paul explains in Romans 7, "No longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" (vv. 17-18; cf.20). Sin is still resident in the flesh, so that we are inhibited and restrained from being able to give full and perfect expression to the new nature. Possessing the fullness of the divine nature without the corruption of our unredeemed flesh is a promise we will realize only in the future (cf. Rom 8.23; Phil 3:20-21; 2 Pet 1:3-4). Biblical terminology, then, does not say that a Christian has two different natures. He has but one nature, the new nature in Christ. The old self dies and the new self lives; they do not coexist. It is not a remaining old nature but the remaining garment of sinful flesh that causes Christians to sin. The Christian is a single new person, a totally new creation, not a spiritual schizophrenic. It is the filthy coat of remaining humanness in which the new creation dwells that continues to hinder and contaminate his living. The believer as a total person is transformed but not yet wholly perfect. He has residing sin but no longer reigning sin (cf. Rom 6:14). He is no longer the old man corrupted but is the new man created in righteousness and holiness, awaiting full salvation (cf. Rom. 13:11).

b. Woe Number 2 - The Garment of Flesh - Romans 7:18-20

The second woe is the filthy garment of sinful flesh that we reside in. Paul states very specifically that it is his flesh in which no good thing dwells. His spirit desires righteousness, but his humanness hinders the

expression of that desire. We will not say more about this since the preceding quote pretty much explains the fact that our flesh is the real culprit in our sin, not our spirit.

c. Woe Number 3 - The Principle of Sin in Our Flesh - Romans 7:21-23

The third woe is the principle of sin which resides in our members. This fits with our previous assertion that the source of sin in our lives is the flesh in which we reside, not the sin principle which was nailed to the cross. The word "law" in these verses can be best translated "principle". Paul finds two principles, the principle of sin in his members, and the principle of the spirit in his mind.

Paul describes the condition of his life that whenever he would do good, evil was close at hand. We have the same problem. Evil is not very far from us in word, deed, or action. Verse 22 shows Paul's true attitude towards the law, that of delight. For the true Christian the law of God is something that is eagerly obeyed from a heart of love, not obligation. Unfortunately, we have the principle of sin which wars against this desire and it is here where the conflict is joined.

3. The Spiritual Warfare movement falls to a mystical form of Christianity when it teaches that we can pray hedges and bind Satan.

The concept of hedges comes in large measure from Job 1:10 where we read Satan telling God that because of the hedge that God had placed about Job Satan was unable to touch him. From this one mention comes a host of speculative ideas about hedges. However, note the following:

- a. The hedge was placed around Job by God and not as a result of Job's prayers.
- b. Job was unaware of the hedge that God had placed about him. There is no indication anywhere in Job that Job knew about this hedge or its removal. As far as Job was concerned, the afflictions he received were from the Lord and not Satan (Job 2:10). In fact, after Job chapters 1 and 2 Satan is not mentioned in the rest of the book!
- c. There is no indication that Job made any prayer regarding the re-establishment of his hedge of protection.
- d. Nowhere are we told that Job prayed to God for the restoration of blessing. He wanted to talk to God about why God had done what He done, but there is no hint anywhere in Job that Job bound Satan or demanded the restoration of blessing from God.

Another issue to be dealt with under this topic of hedges is the interpretation of Matthew 6:13. Some say that we are to pray to be delivered from Satan (one of the interpretations of *from evil is from the evil one*). They then go on to speak of hedges. However, this verse is best understood as being the emotional heart-cry of a believer who desires to be spared trials (*pierosmos*) because of the potential of that trial turning into a temptation to evil. It is the cry of one who wants to stay as far away from sin as possible so as to not fall prey to the Tempter Satan himself.

Matthew 12:25-30 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast

out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

Some people try to teach the binding of Satan from Matthew 12:25-30. They say that Jesus is talking about the practice of binding Satan and that we as believers need to bind him as well. However, a thorough study of this text shows that Jesus is not teaching that at all, but is attacking the Pharisees in their folly of attributing the casting out of demons He was doing to Satan. His point is that Satan will not cast out Satan. Therefore, if He (Christ) is casting out demons, then Christ is greater than Satan. The issue is not that of a believer binding Satan, but that Christ is more powerful than Satan.

One more issue on this topic is that of “what exactly is our ‘shield’ against Satan?” We find the answer to that in Ephesians 6:16 where we read about the shield of faith. Our defense against the tempter and against the doubts that assail us is our faith in an all-powerful and all-loving God who will not allow us to be tempted above that which we are able but will make a way of escape so that we will be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

4. The Spiritual Warfare movement incorrectly seeks out encounters with Satan when it assumes that we have unlimited authority over Satan through the power of Christ.

The Spiritual Warfare movement would have us think that we have been granted authority over Satan by Christ as as such we can exercise that authority by binding demons, casting out demons, and exercising control over the powers of darkness.

Mark 16:17-18 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

In order to prove the above assertion, proponents of this thinking make their way to Mark 16:17-18 where Christ appears to give believers authority over Satan, the ability to speak in tongues, the ability to pick up deadly snakes and drink poison without harm, and the ability to heal. Note that this is a package deal. One cannot say that we can cast on devils but not heal and vice versa. However, a thorough investigation of this text would have us understand that these signs were given to the Apostles and not to every believer for all time. As such, we are not given complete authority over Satan like that given to the Apostles. Furthermore, there is no teaching in all of the Epistles of Paul regarding the exercise of casting out demons. It seems to that if this were such a necessary thing, then why is it not mentioned anywhere but here?

5. The Spiritual Warfare movement attributes many results of the fall, such as death, disease, and natural disasters, to the direct work of Satan.

We have already discussed this in length in the sections above. Suffice it to say that Satan can cause physical disease, natural disasters, and death. However, he is not always the cause of such. We live in a fallen world and because of that many of the ills that befall mankind are the results of the curse and not the results of Satan's work.

6. Nowhere does the Bible indicate the existence of territorial demons.

Many in the Spiritual Warfare movement take the reference to the Prince of Persia in Daniel 10:13 to refer to a hierarchy of fallen angels organized along the lines of

national governments. From this they then make the leap into saying that there is a demon over every town, village, city, house, state, and country. Furthermore, the secret to spiritual success is to identify these demons and confront them directly in the name of Jesus.

Unfortunately, all of this is sheer speculation. We are not given a complete picture of the organization of the fallen angelic hosts in Scripture. We do know they are organized, but to make them mirror national governments to the degree that the Spiritual Warfare movement does is unwarranted. We just do not know. The following quote sums up this issue very well:

Scripture implies that Satan's hordes are highly regimented (cf. Eph 6:12), but nowhere does the Bible say that Satan has assigned them to every geo-political unit. Nowhere does the Bible give an example of a believer confronting or rebuking geographical demons. Nowhere does God's Word say that we are to command demons to give up any territory. In fact, nothing in Scripture offers any instructions for territorial warfare. No self-styled "expert" in the practice can legitimately claim to have gained his knowledge or skills from the Bible. (John MacArthur, *How To Meet The Enemy*, p. 43)

7. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told to confront Satan in "power encounters."

The Spiritual Warfare movement would have all Christians become "divine Rambos" seeking out and destroying enemy targets. However, nowhere in the Bible are we given this task. We are told to resist the devil and stand firm against the devil, but we are never told to attack the devil or to seek him out in order to confront him.

G. How Are We To Battle Satan?

1. We are to put on our spiritual armor

Ephesians 6:12-18 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

- a. Belt of Truth

A belt was used by the Roman soldiers to hold up their tunic as they would go into battle. If their tunic was loose and flapping around, it gave the enemy an advantage. The belt was also used to carry the sword, dagger, and medals won by the soldier in previous battles.

The belt of truth (*aletheia*) can refer to two things. First, it may be understood as truth in opposition to falsehood, that is, the truth of the Word of God. Secondly, it can be understood as an attitude of truthfulness or sincerity. Perhaps Paul had both concepts in mind.

- 1). The Content of Truth

Our fight against Satan must be based on the truthfulness of the Word of God. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) whereas God is the author of

truth. Whenever we find ourselves fighting Satan it is necessary to go back to the truth of God's Word. Satan is a deceiver, and the only way to fight his deception is by truth.

2). The Attitude of Truth

This refers to the attitude of honesty and commitment, a readiness to fight. Most Christians are not prepared to fight Satan, instead they run at the first sign of hostility. We need to be ever ready, vigilant, and committed to the battle in order to win.

b. Breastplate of Righteousness

One of the most important pieces of a Roman soldier's armor was the breastplate. Breastplates were usually made of either heavy linen overlaid with pieces of metal or animal hooves, or they were made of a solid piece of metal hammered in the shape of the soldier's chest. The breastplate covered the vital areas of the heart and bowels.

Again Paul appears to have a two-fold meaning. First, we have the imputed righteousness of Christ that protects us from the accusation of Satan (Philippians 3:10ff. cf. 1 John 2:1-2). Without this righteousness we cannot stand in God's presence or successfully fight the spiritual battle to which we are called. Secondly, there is the practical righteousness of a Godly life. Believers whose lives are filled with sin find themselves easy prey for Satan. Furthermore, their sin may cause God to remove His divine protection from them leaving them exposed to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.

c. Shoes of the Gospel

As any person in the military will attest, protection for the feet is a critical necessity for the foot-soldier. In Roman times, the soldiers wore thick-soled sandals with hobnails in the soles much like spikes in football shoes. This allowed the soldier to stand firm without slipping as well as endure long marches over difficult terrain.

The translation "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" is a somewhat awkward translation. A better rendering of the thought is "stand firm having your feet made ready by being shod with the gospel of peace." What does Paul mean? Some think he is talking about the preaching of the gospel, but that can't be since we are within the context of spiritual warfare.

The answer to this is to ask, "what relationship does the Gospel have on our spiritual battle against Satan?"

- 1). We can endure long marches because we are assured of ultimate victory.
- 2). We can endure rough terrain because we have the hope of eternal salvation.
- 3). We can endure the heat of the battle because of our confidence in God who is able to strengthen us to stand against Satan and empowers us for victory.

d. Shield of Faith

A Roman soldier's shield came in two varieties. The first was a small, round shield made of metal or some other material that the soldier would use in hand-

to-hand combat. The other was a large wooden plank overlaid with leather and soaked in oil or resin. This shield was able to withstand flaming arrows shot by the enemy while protecting the entire soldier from harm. The word Paul used for shield (*thureon*) refers to the latter.

The darts that Satan throws is best understood to refer to the doubts and temptations he sends our way. God says He will provide all our needs, Satan says God will let us down. God says He is all we need, Satan says that God will leave us short. Satan's major method of attack against men is doubt. He started using this tactic in the garden, he used it again on Christ, and he uses it today. It works, it is highly effective, and it can only be successfully combated using our faith in God who will not let us down.

e. Helmet of Salvation

A Roman soldier's helmet was a necessary article of armor. It was made of leather covered by metal plates, or of solid metal. It was used to protect the head against arrows and against the long broadsword (*rhomphaia*) which could be used by an enemy to deal a crushing blow to the skull, even to the point of splitting the head in two.

Our helmet is salvation. It is not salvation in the sense of being saved, but salvation in the sense of its ultimate realization and the believer's present assurance of ultimate glorification.

Satan uses the broadsword of discouragement and doubt against us. If he can get us to doubt our salvation, or become discouraged in our battle with him, he has won a major victory. Only by donning the helmet of the security of salvation can we successfully withstand Satan's attacks of doubt and discouragement.

f. Sword of the Spirit

A Roman soldier had two types of swords which were used in battle. The first was the large broadsword (*rhomphaia*) which measured four or so feet in length and had a double edge. Secondly there was the *machaira*, or short dagger. That is the word used here.

What is our dagger? It is the word of God. The word "word" here is *rhema*, a specific saying or phrase. It is not the Word of God in total, but the word of God in particular. Therefore we understand this as referring to the specific phrases or verses in the Bible that God has given us in defense of the temptations and attacks of Satan.

We see this vividly in the account of Christ's temptation in Matthew 4. In each case Christ used a verse out of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy to be exact, in order to combat the attack of Satan.

g. All Prayer

Often this piece of the spiritual armor is omitted, but it is the power which enables us to successfully use the spiritual armor God has given us. If we attempt to fight Satan using our own resources we will fall in defeat. It is only the power of God, appropriated by prayer, that will enable us to win.

2. We are to be Sober and Alert

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Peter tells us to be sober and vigilant. Often we as believers do not see Satan coming until he is upon us. As we grow and mature in our Christian lives we become more and more aware of Satan and how he attacks us. As a result, we are able to take a proactive stand against him.

3. We are to resist him firm in the faith

1 Peter 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Finally, we are to resist Satan in the power of God. To resist him in our flesh is to invite defeat. Note that James tells us to first submit to God, then we can resist the devil.