



THE ESSENTIAL
GUIDE TO

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- LEARN TO USE SPIRITUAL WEAPONS
 - KEEP YOUR MIND AND HEART
STRONG IN CHRIST
 - RECOGNIZE SATAN'S LIES
AND DEFEND YOUR LOVED ONES

**NEIL T. ANDERSON
AND TIMOTHY M. WARNER**



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Introduction

We are seeing the greatest spiritual harvest this world has ever seen. Not since Pentecost have we seen such phenomenal growth of the church worldwide. Africa was less than 5 percent Christian at the beginning of the twentieth century. At the end of the second millennium, it was nearly 50 percent Christian. There were only about 5 million believers in China when the Communist regime took over. Now the estimates vary from 100 to as high as 150 million believers, and missiologists estimate that between 25,000 and 35,000 people are coming to Christ daily in China. Indonesia is the world's most populated Muslim nation, but the percentage of Christians there has been increasing so rapidly that the government won't release accurate figures.¹

Meanwhile, more than 2,500 Christian radio and television stations broadcast the gospel daily to an audience of 4.6 billion. I had the privilege of speaking to the staff of HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, at their annual meeting. I was impressed with their commitment and their technological expertise. The same holds for TransWorld Radio and Far Eastern Broadcasting, who are working together with HCJB to blanket this planet with

the good news. They can now package a radio station in a suitcase and broadcast the gospel anywhere in the world. We are the first generation that can say without reservation, “We have the technology to actually fulfill the Great Commission in our generation.”

Cooperation in ministry is another significant sign that we are in for a great harvest. We may be driving different cars, but we are all driving them in the same kingdom and getting our gas from the same station. There is a growing majority in the body of Christ who are sick and tired of Christians competing with or defeating one another. It is beyond the time for the church to personally appropriate the truth of Ephesians 4:1–6:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

God is preparing His people and pulling His church together for the final harvest. In the high priestly prayer, Jesus is praying that we will all be one just as He and the Father are one (see John 17:21). He is not praying for the old ecumenism that was diluted by liberalism. He is praying that the true born-again, Bible-believing community known as the body of Christ will work together to stem the tide of liberalism and immorality, the rising threat of the New Age, and the secular movement of universalism.

Caution must be taken not to water down the movement. Unity in the Spirit is not universalism. Paul says,

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has

light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2 Corinthians 6:14–15 NASB

We must maintain an unshakeable commitment to the authority of Scripture, and never compromise our character in order to produce results.

Mission America has the goal of praying for and sharing Christ with every person in our nation. That will be impossible unless the Holy Spirit draws the church together as partners in ministry. More than eighty denominations and two hundred parachurch ministries are cooperating to accomplish this task. This united effort to reach our nation for Christ is being called “Celebrate Jesus.” We don’t have to throw away our denominational distinctives or doctrinal beliefs to preserve the unity of the Spirit. But we do have to believe in “a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all” (Colossians 3:11 NASB).

The only legitimate basis for unity within the body of Christ is the realization that every born-again Christian is a child of God. Cooperation will require forgiveness and reconciliation. It will necessitate toleration of other people’s perspectives without compromising personal convictions. We must respect the denominational distinctives of others and relate with integrity in all matters.

Recently, I was conducting a conference for fifteen hundred pastors and missionaries in Bacalod, Philippines. A group of Filipino teenagers committed themselves to praying around the clock for the duration of the conference. They were on their knees pleading that their leaders upstairs would repent and agree to work together. I was never so humbled in my life! This should be the prayer of Christian leaders. Legitimate Christian leaders should desire unity in the body of Christ, which is the

prayer of our Lord. Could it be that our Christian leadership may be the major stumbling block to world revival? Can the church rise above its leaders?

If you were the enemy, how would you work to defeat the church in its efforts to reach this world for Christ? Since the Bible teaches that a house divided against itself cannot stand (see Mark 3:25), the enemy will certainly work to divide us. First, he will work on our minds, since a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (see James 1:8). Paul writes, “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1). Then the enemy will seek to divide our marriages and our ministries. Is that happening?

Another sign of a great awakening is the growing awareness that “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 NASB). We may disagree about how to engage the enemy, but at least we are starting to agree that we all have one. Without this realization we are like blindfolded warriors striking out at each other and ourselves. We must never let the devil set the agenda, but we dare not underestimate his influence or allow the attitude that says, “The devil made me do it.” We are responsible for our own attitudes and actions. Satan is a defeated foe, but he is also the god of this world, and “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19 NASB). How are we going to reach this world for Christ if Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving (see 2 Corinthians 4:4)?

With all the moral corruption in the world, it is tempting to ask, “Why doesn’t the Lord just come back and end all this?” I heard a retired African-American pastor give the correct answer to this question as he addressed a group of inner-city pastors after the Los Angeles riots that were prompted by the verdict

of the Rodney King trial. As my memory serves me, he said, “Fifty years ago the Lord looked into the kingdom of darkness and He saw me. Had He come at that time, I would have been locked out of the kingdom of God for all eternity. The Lord is not slow about His promises. For Him one day is as a thousand years. He is waiting for the gospel to go out to the ends of the earth, and then the end will come.” We longingly look for the Lord’s return, but how many of us still have a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a co-worker who doesn’t know the Lord? How selfish it is for us to pray for His return before doing what we can in this life to see that all may hear the good news.

Another tempting question is, “Why doesn’t God do something?” What more does God need to do for the church to come alive in Christ and fulfill our purpose for being here? He has defeated the devil, sent Christ to die for our sins, given us eternal life, equipped us with the Holy Spirit, and provided the Manufacturer’s Operating Manual (the Bible), which explains all the hows and whys.

The missing ingredient is our response in repentance and faith. So what are we waiting for? A new word from God? The canon of Scripture is closed! The next new word will probably come face-to-face. Power from on high? It already came, at Pentecost. Paul wrote,

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.

Ephesians 1:18–19 NASB

We already have all the power we need to be and do all that He wants us to be and do. So let’s “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Ephesians 6:10 NASB).

Introduction

Every day we face three enemies that threaten our faith in God: the world, the flesh, and the devil. In this book we will focus primarily on the work of Satan and the victory we have in Christ. The remainder of this book is written from the perspective of Timothy Warner, who is my dear friend and colleague in ministry. The testimonies come from our experience in ministry, but the details have been changed to protect the identities of those involved. It is our prayer that you come to understand the nature of spiritual warfare in such a way that you will have confidence in God that the battle has already been won, and you will know how to stand firm in your faith.

Dr. Neil T. Anderson



A Reluctant Warrior?

In this business of spiritual warfare, we are all learners, to say the least, and we have all had to come through the process of learning to fight in this battle.

I (Tim) grew up in a family of eight children—four boys and four girls. I was the youngest of the boys. As a boy I was not a fighter. Not that there weren't opportunities. There were other boys in our neighborhood who were itching for a good fight. Once in a while I would throw some green apples at them, but usually I would run rather than fight.

When I finished high school, however, the United States was involved in the Second World War, and within ninety days of graduation I found myself in an army camp, learning to fight. I didn't mind the rigorous physical conditioning, but I hated the fighting part of army basic training. Targets on the rifle range at first were the usual circular ones with a bull's-eye in

the middle. They soon became images of men, however, and I recoiled at the thought of shooting at another human being.

Then there was hand-to-hand combat, which we were to practice with our “combat buddy.” It was with great reluctance that I tried to learn how to harm and even kill another man with my own hands.

What I hated most, though, was bayonet drill. I was taught to lunge at a straw-filled dummy, piercing it with the bayonet fixed on the end of my M-1 rifle, all the while snarling and growling like a ferocious animal. I could think of few things more repulsive than that. Yes, I was a reluctant warrior.¹

A Reluctant Spiritual Warrior

Perhaps it was not surprising, then, that I carried that same attitude over into my spiritual life. I grew up in a thoroughly evangelical home and church, but I was taught not to be a fighter spiritually. The safe course was to stay “small and pure.” When it came to things like Satan and demons, the safe course was to ignore them. It was easy to go overboard with such things, I was told, but this would not happen if I did not even talk about them.

Following my army experience, I entered a good evangelical college and majored in religious studies. This was followed by three years at a theological seminary that specialized in inductive Bible study. Two years after graduation from seminary I found myself on a freighter, sailing for missionary service in a tribal village in West Africa. I would soon find that nothing in my Christian upbringing, none of my biblical and theological study, and none of my professors had prepared me to function knowledgeably and effectively in the war I was entering. To be more accurate, I was not entering the war for the first time by becoming a missionary. I was only going to a place where the

elements of battle were going to be much more overt and more difficult to handle. This was also a place where Satan's control over the people had not been seriously challenged. And I was still a reluctant warrior.

In fact, though I did not yet realize it, I was entering a situation not too different from the combat zone of World War II. It was just that the armies were spiritual rather than physical. As a former soldier in the Allied army, I knew the sound of rifle and machine-gun fire. I knew the sound of incoming artillery shells. I had seen the dead and wounded bodies of my comrades. The spiritual dimensions and the casualties of the battle I was now entering would not be as obvious, but they would be just as real and deadly. Unfortunately, I did not gain this perspective on missionary service until years later when studying spiritual warfare.

Oh yes, I knew Ephesians 6:12, which clearly told me that the real struggle was “not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” And I not only knew it; I believed it. At least I would have given the correct answer to any question posed to me on that subject, but that truth had not yet moved from formal belief to functional belief.

My thirty-five years of involvement in Christian higher education have taught me that a person can successfully complete both Bible college and theological seminary and still have most of one's knowledge filed away in the filing cabinet of the brain, not operating in the control center of the heart. We all talk a better theology than we live out in daily life. Only the Lord himself had perfect integrity between profession and practice. In some cases, however, the chasm between profession and practice among us humans has become very wide and very deep.

Further complicating this problem is the fact that often we have not learned some key truth related to the Christian life, or we have had the truth twisted in some way by well-meaning but faulty teachers. In my own case, as a young believer I had had some problems in both areas. I certainly had not been led into a correct understanding of either my identity in Christ or my relationship as a believer to Satan and demons.

How Do You Keep Your Balance?

This weakness in the discipline of new believers reflects what I believe to be one of Satan's favorite tactics—namely, to cause us to view good and evil as opposite ends of a spectrum. The truth is that Satan creates evil by perverting what God created to be good, and he does this by pushing the truth to extremes in either of two opposite directions. This can be demonstrated on almost any subject one cares to explore, but on the subject of demons it comes down to the idea that demons are either behind everything or behind nothing. This is an attractive position, because the answers are always easier at the extremes. If demons are not functional parts of our world, then we don't have to even think about them. If they are behind all of our problems, then we simply need to learn to get rid of them. But if the truth is somewhere between those extremes, we need discernment to know what is demonic and what is the result of living in a fallen world. Such discernment involves a great deal more knowledge and carries much more responsibility than do the easy answers at the extremes.

Simon Peter's Wise Advice

Peter gives us some help with this in his first letter. As Peter writes, it is evident he is an older and wiser man than the one

we see during his experiences with Jesus in the Gospels. He has learned many things during his eventful life, and in this letter he is sharing some of that learning with his readers. After reviewing some basics of the gospel message, he gives a basic command: “Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled” (1 Peter 1:13). This doesn’t sound like the impulsive young man we encountered in the Gospels. No, he is indeed older and wiser. He has learned that the spiritual battle is a battle for the mind. Therefore, “Prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled.”

At the end of the letter, he comes back to that same theme:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

1 Peter 5:8–9

I am not sure how *resist* got changed to *ignore* in the thinking of so many believers. Certainly, if Satan could not do anything to “good Christians,” as many have taught, Peter would have said something like, “Yes, we have this enemy, but don’t worry about him. He can’t do anything to you if you are a real believer.”

I assume that Peter chose his words carefully, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and he commands us to be “self-controlled and alert” in relation to this enemy. *Self-controlled* is the same word he used in 1:13, and he uses it again in 4:7 in relation to being ready for “the end of all things.” It is not insignificant that Paul says concerning the second coming of Christ that we should “be alert and self-controlled” (1 Thessalonians 5:6). These are exactly the same words Peter uses here in speaking of our relation to the devil. His point is that while we do not know the time of the second coming, we should not

be taken completely by surprise by it. We should be prepared to meet the Lord with no advance notice, whether that be in a secret rapture of the church or through a sudden death. I have been in several life-threatening automobile accidents. In none of them would I have had even ten seconds to make my peace with God. I needed to be up-to-date in my relationship with Him so that I was ready to meet Him at any moment, with no advance warning. I needed to be self-controlled and alert in view of the possibility that I could be called on to stand before the Lord with no time for special preparation.

Peter now tells us that we need to have the same attitude toward the devil, who is the “ruler” of this world. Peter is saying that we need to be *self-controlled and alert* because “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19 NASB).

I think Martin Luther had the right perspective when he wrote in his famous hymn, “And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to triumph through us.” To be alert to the activity of the enemy is not to be demon-centered. We are to be Christ-centered and stand firm in our faith. Our lives, like Luther’s, are to be characterized by the confidence that in Christ we are more than conquerors (see Romans 8:37). This does not mean, however, that we can ignore a desperate enemy who is committed to the destruction of our witness and ministry.

Peter knew something about the enemy’s tactics from his early experience as a disciple. You will remember that it was Peter to whom Jesus was relating when He said, “Get behind me, Satan!” (Matthew 16:23). The clear implication is that Satan had been putting thoughts into Peter’s mind without Peter realizing it. Jesus was alert to the way Satan operates and recognized the source of the thoughts. Peter obviously didn’t. He had not yet learned to be self-controlled and alert. (In any

case, it would be something of a shock to have Jesus say those words to you, wouldn't it?)

Peter may also have been reflecting on his experience of denying Christ at the time of His trial. In the upper room, he had made the strongest assertions of his commitment to Jesus. "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will," he said. When Jesus predicted Peter would actually deny Him, Peter confidently affirmed, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Matthew 26:33, 35).

Yet Peter's pride caused him not to be self-controlled and alert a short time later when he was confronted about his relationship to Jesus by a couple of servant girls and others who were observing the trial. He not only denied that he was a follower of Jesus, he "began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!'" (Matthew 26:74). He did not resist the tempter as he now commands us to do. Jesus suddenly was not Lord; He was just "the man." From his older and wiser perspective, Peter now speaks words of wisdom to all of us: "Be self-controlled and alert because you have an enemy that is out to destroy you."

Be Prepared to Fight

It is dangerous to be in a war zone if you are not prepared to meet the enemy. During the Second World War, I served with a unit that was "mopping up" pockets of enemy resistance that still existed after the main lines of battle had moved on. We would drive until we met such resistance, do whatever was needed to overcome it, and then move on. Because we never knew how far we would go before meeting the enemy, we had to be constantly on the alert for signs of enemy troops.

At one point in that process, our convoy of vehicles stopped. I was fairly far back in the long line of vehicles, so it was not

possible to know what was happening at the front of the line. While we were stopped, a driver a few vehicles ahead of mine went to sleep, and when he woke up with a start, he discovered that the convoy had moved on without him. In his haste to catch up, he missed a turn and led the rest of us right into enemy-held territory. The problem was that we were not prepared to meet the enemy. The chaplain and I were traveling with the medics attached to the service company, with all kinds of supplies and equipment to support the combat troops, but we were not armed for battle. As a result, we had to turn around and beat a hasty retreat. That was not only embarrassing, it was dangerous.

Many Christians approach the spiritual enemy like this, however, and then they wonder why such bad things happen to them. It is bad enough to meet the enemy when you are prepared. It is quite another thing to meet him when you are not prepared. The problem is complicated when one is talking about spiritual warfare, because the enemy is not visible to the eyes. One normally doesn't have any problem identifying an enemy soldier or tank, although camouflage can be a bit tricky even with a physical enemy. With a spiritual enemy, however, the need for self-control and alertness increases significantly.

I learned something about this some years ago when I was in Reno, Nevada, for ministry in a church there. I was with several other men, and we decided to visit one of the famous gambling casinos—not to gamble, just to look, to be tourists. It was my very first exposure to such a place, and I was soon absorbed in all of the fascinating things going on around me. The dealers obviously were very skilled in handling the cards. The roulette wheels were more intriguing than the pictures I had seen of such things. One particular lady was playing three slot machines at the same time! She had a handful of coins in one hand, and she operated the lever on the machine with the other. She had obviously done this many times before, because

she could put the coins in the slots and pull the levers in almost perfect rhythm. It was fascinating to watch her.

About this time, however, I began to ask myself, *What is going on here? Why are these people here? What are they looking for? What are they finding?* Suddenly my fascination with a tourist attraction turned to revulsion on the one hand and concern for the gamblers on the other. Part of me wanted to get out of that den of iniquity, and part of me wanted to rescue the people trapped in the snare of the enemy. I began to understand what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians, “Christ’s love compels us. . . . So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 16).

It is so easy to see only the human, physical side of life that we tend to forget that “what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). One of Satan’s strategies is to get us to think and live within the limits of the time-space world. He has obviously been very successful with that strategy in the Western world. Our culture conditions us to think this way. Our public education is built on the premise that this is an evolved world, with no eternal perspectives, and religious matters therefore can be left out of the educational program without losing anything in the process.

That kind of thinking makes it easy to believe that we should ignore the devil instead of resisting him. The so-called Enlightenment thinking is not really enlightened at all. It is largely responsible for eliminating God and eternal truth from their central place. Paul warned, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ” (Colossians 2:8). There can be no doubt, however, that Peter’s command is still valid, even in this “enlightened” age. We need to be self-controlled and alert when it comes to all things spiritual, and that includes our spiritual enemy the devil.

It's a World War

Another observation about this passage from Peter is that this battle is not limited to a few places in the world. Peter says that our “brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings” at the hands of this enemy (1 Peter 5:9). Satan and demons are active not only in preliterate, tribal societies, but also in the sophisticated, enlightened Western world. Satan’s tactics may change slightly in the West, but he is still committed to destroying the work of God any place and any time he finds an opportunity. Jesus said that this enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy (see John 10:10), and he does not limit that activity to any geographic location.

So while we do not see life dominated by Satan and his host of demons, neither do we assume that we can just ignore them. The biblical warnings about Satan and demons are all addressed to believers, and our basic attitude is to be one of self-control and alertness. To put it another way, we need to have spiritual discernment. We need spiritual eyesight to perceive when we are dealing with this crafty enemy.

Learning to Spot the Enemy

At this point someone may raise the objection, “Yes, but don’t you have to have a lot of theological education to be able to do that? It is fine for you to say these things, but how can an ‘ordinary Christian’ expect to have that kind of discernment?”

Jesus had a rather simple answer to this question. He said that His sheep know the Shepherd’s voice, “but they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice” (John 10:5). Knowing the Shepherd’s voice is not a matter of formal education. It is the result of spending lots of time with Him. It comes from

listening to Him so much that His voice and His truth are readily recognizable, and we begin to screen out all that is not true and any voice that is suggesting things contrary to what the Shepherd has said.

Some of the most discerning people I know when it comes to recognizing the voice of the Shepherd and the voice of the enemy live in parts of the world where formal theological education is not readily available. This does not keep them from knowing the Shepherd, however. Even in the West, discernment is not in direct relation to education. It is always in relation to the intimacy of one's relationship with the Shepherd.

The idea behind the term *self-control* is relevant here. The Greek word is translated "sober" in the King James Bible, and that is an accurate, literal translation. The word can mean "not intoxicated with wine or strong drink." In the New Testament, however, it is almost always used as a figure of speech to indicate "not intoxicated with ideas and things of the world." A self-controlled person has heeded Paul's admonition to "stop being conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2, author's translation). As Phillips paraphrases Paul, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within." A self-controlled person is one whose thinking is being shaped by God's truth and not by the prevailing culture in which that person lives.

Our culture tells us that spirits are not very important parts of our world. Cause-effect relationships are almost always thought to be explainable in scientific, biochemical terms or with the logical thought of fallen human nature. Higher education has given little thought to the reality of the spiritual world. Western rationalism and naturalism pervade our educational system and therefore are absorbed by students without our realizing what is happening. We begin to make faulty presuppositions

about life because we have not examined those presuppositions. Self-controlled persons have learned to ask the right questions based on their relationship with God and on their knowledge of what He has said is true.

This means, on the one hand, that they will not live in fear of this spiritual enemy, because the Scriptures are clear that he has been defeated by Christ through the cross and the resurrection and that victory is available to us as God's children. On the other hand, they will not just ignore this enemy, but will "resist him, standing firm in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9)—the faith that in Christ we are "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37).

Know God, but Know Your Enemy, Too

Our first priority is to know God, but if we are really at war with a clever, experienced enemy, we need to know as much as we can about him. One of the first laws of warfare—any kind of warfare—is to know your enemy. Paul told the Corinthians that he was "not unaware of his [Satan's] schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11). He was not unaware of how Satan thought, and the Corinthians would have picked this up from a play on words in the language in which they read the letter. The word for *unaware* and the word for *schemes* are built on the same root word, which is the word for *mind*. Not to know how your enemy thinks and how he acts is to give the enemy a strategic advantage over you. This is why governments develop very extensive intelligence-gathering programs. In order to protect themselves, they want to know as much as they can about their enemy or even a potential enemy.

During the Second World War, the unit with which I served was assigned at one point to positions facing what was known as the Siegfried line. The Siegfried line was a set of elaborate defensive fortifications facing Germany's border with France.

To simply look out over the landscape, one would have had no idea that that kind of defensive structure existed. However, we knew that what appeared to be an innocent-looking farm building was in reality a well-camouflaged concrete bunker housing heavy artillery. To attack a few enemy soldiers in a farm building, we would have sent out an infantry squad armed with rifles and hand grenades. To attack heavy fortifications, we called for the Air Force to prepare the way. Knowing our enemy made all the difference.

More recently, the United States was involved in the invasion of Iraq. Again, because of effective intelligence gathering, we knew where the enemy had its best troops, tank traps, and minefields. The ignore-the-enemy philosophy would have said, “We have the biggest, best army in the world, the most sophisticated weapons, the smartest bombs. Let’s just go in and wipe them out.” That would have led to a frontal attack right into the heart of the enemy’s defenses. But because we knew the enemy—knew how he thought—we could outflank his defenses and save much suffering and many lives.

Again, this does not mean that we are enemy-centered in our thinking. It doesn’t take that kind of concentrated attention to know how he operates. But if we don’t know the enemy’s tactics, we give him a tactical advantage over us. God said through Hosea, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). That lack of knowledge is often ignorance of God’s Word and of His directions for how we are to live, but it applies as well to being ignorant of His warnings about our enemy. Most believers would not be able to say with Paul, “We are not ignorant of Satan’s schemes.”

The Bible itself gives us the balance we need. Christ is the focus of Scripture. There are no long passages on demonology. Therefore our primary focus should be on knowing God and His ways. If we know the truth, then we can easily detect the

deceptions of the father of lies. God didn't reveal Satan's ways or assignments in detail, because they change. Christ is the way, but Satan has many ways. Jesus is the truth; Satan is the father of lies.

Federal agents don't study counterfeit money. They study the real thing in order to detect the counterfeit. To protect the public, however, they know how counterfeiters work. In the same way, the Scriptures do not give us a nice, neat organizational chart of the satanic realm. But they do affirm the reality of this enemy and provide the instruction we need to live in victory over him. Satan and demons played a very significant role in the teaching and ministry of Jesus. He certainly did not ignore this enemy, and neither should we.

We are never told that we will not have to fight. On the contrary, we are assured that we will. That is why we need to be *self-controlled and alert* and ready to resist, *standing firm in the faith* (see 1 Peter 4:7; 5:8–9). We cannot exercise faith in what we do not know or really believe.

We do not fight in this war to determine who will win. That was settled once and for all at the crucifixion and the resurrection (see Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14–15). But we are called on to appropriate that victory and to use the resources provided for us by the Captain of our salvation until He calls us home or until the enemy is finally consigned to his final destiny—the lake of fire.

So What Am I Afraid Of?

If Christ has really conquered Satan, and if we, as God's children, participate in that victory, why do we so often recoil in fear from the very thought of Satan and demons? Why do we try to escape the battle by denying that it exists?

Some people excuse themselves from active resistance by supposing that only a few are called to resist the enemy and

that they are given a special gift to do so. The Scriptures do not speak of any such gift. All Christians are to wear the armor and use the weapons of this warfare. All Christians are to submit to God and resist the enemy.

When people hear that we (both Neil and Tim) were on the faculty at leading evangelical seminaries, they often ask what our faculty colleagues thought about our teaching and practice in this area. Most appreciate the need for balanced biblical instruction but are glad they don't have to do it. Some don't want to think about it. For others, it is not academically credible, and some are actually afraid to deal with it. Yes, there can be a fear of involvement with this enemy even among those who would seem to have the most complete biblical knowledge on the subject.

The problem is, as we have already noted, that our faith is often formal but not functional. We know truth in our heads, but it does not get to our hearts, from which come the issues of life (see Proverbs 4:23). Theological knowledge, even orthodox theological knowledge, does not necessarily translate into practical application in daily life. This was evident in the life of Israel in the Old Testament. God said through the prophet, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me" (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus said of the religious leaders of His day who could quote the law and the prophets that they were like tombs that looked good on the outside but inside were full of dead bones (see Matthew 23:27). Jesus insisted that "by their fruit you will recognize them" (Matthew 7:16). Paul put it very clearly to the Corinthians: "The kingdom of God does not consist in words (*logos*), but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20 NASB). Concerning this verse, John Calvin said, "For how small an affair is it for any one to have skill to prate eloquently, while he has nothing but empty tinkling."²

Sometimes when a person challenges me about including demonic activity in dealing with problems people bring to me,

I say, “Okay. Let me bring to you the next difficult case I have that involves such problems, and you can show me how you would minister to them.” That is not usually what they have in mind. I discovered early in my experience that it was much easier to study about this subject and even to teach about it than it was to practice it.

Satan knows this, and he derives special pleasure when Christians say by their actions that they are afraid of him. Satan should be running from the Christian, not the Christian from Satan. Unfortunately, this enemy has been able to use fear to take many soldiers out of the battle. The fear of God—not the fear of the devil—is the beginning of wisdom.³

A man who came for counsel told me that he had been in Bible college, studying to be a missionary, when his children began to have nighttime disturbances that he understood to be demonic. He also assumed, probably correctly, that the attacks were being provoked by his commitment to missionary service. He said, “I don’t want my children going through this, so I’m getting out.” He left school and gave up his call to ministry. My response to him was, “You think you have put your children in a safe place. You have probably put them in the most dangerous place in the world. You have said to Satan, ‘I don’t know a power stronger than yours. So if you leave my children alone, I will leave you alone.’” Satan will shake hands on an agreement like that every time. He loves to hear Christians express that kind of fear. Fear of anything or anyone other than God is inconsistent with a genuine faith in God. The problem with such a deal is that Satan is a liar. He has no intention of living up to his end of such a bargain.

A pastor was counseling a person who began to manifest demonic control, evidenced by supernatural strength. This produced fear in the pastor, and his response was to back off and say to himself, “I’ll let someone else deal with things like

this.” Thus, fear of Satan caused one more servant of the Lord to withdraw from the heat of the battle and to cease to be of real help to those suffering from Satan’s attacks.

The problem is not really the fear. Fear is a normal response. We just should not let fear control us. We should choose to act in faith on the victory that has been won for us at the cross. “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7).

A model for this is found in the experience of Joshua, when God commissioned him to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. God told Joshua to “be strong and very courageous” (Joshua 1:7; see also vv. 6, 9). He said it not just once, but three times. Why did Joshua need to be courageous? Because the conquest of Canaan was not going to be easy. There were still giants in the land, the same giants seen by the spies forty years before. Joshua, in fact, had been one of those spies, so he knew about the giants and the double-walled cities.

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is resolute action in the presence of fear. There is no need for courage if there is no fear involved. That is why Satan is the source of discouragement. He does not want us to act with courage, so he *discourages* us. God is the encourager. He wants us to act with courage, so He *encourages* us. God has provided the basis on which we can act with courage. It is not just a matter of “whistling in the dark.” It is a decision to act on the basis of who God is and what He has done rather than on the basis of a human perspective on the circumstances.

Still a Reluctant Warrior?

So are your authors still reluctant warriors? In one sense, yes. We don’t enjoy being involved in a battle, even though we are assured of victory. But as we learned about spiritual warfare,

it seemed essential to teach theological students, who were preparing for pastoral or missionary service, how to fight this war. For this reason, we introduced courses to do just that. One of the rewards of our teaching has been to meet graduates all over the world who have told us that our course on this subject was one of the most important ones they ever took.

Not only ministers and missionaries need to know how to fight, however. Every believer will face the same spiritual enemy, and we should not allow Satan to intimidate us and cause us to recoil from the battle. Until Christ returns, the battle will go on, but we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (see Romans 8:37), and we should live in that victory.