



INTRODUCTION

What comes to your mind when you hear the words spiritual warfare?

- C.S. Lewis wisely guides us in the preface of his classic 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.”¹
- So, far from being parochial subject, Clinton Arnold reminds us: “*Spiritual warfare is an integral part of the entire Christian experience.*”²

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS FOR (STUDYING) SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- As theologian Peter Bolt has written: “*The Old Testament is practically silent about demons, then an explosion of references as Jesus appears in the biblical story—at least according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke; then there is a tiny demonic dribble into the period of history recorded by the Acts, and only an occasional drip elsewhere in the New Testament.*”³

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 9.

² Clinton Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, 2–3.

³ Peter Bolt, “Towards a Biblical Theology of the Defeat of the Evil Powers.”



- As David Powlison wisely concludes: *“God seems to think we don't need to know all the details. . . . God tells us what we need to know . . . so that we can live faithfully, courageously, and fruitfully.”*⁴

I. God is absolutely sovereign over all

(a) Creation results from his sovereign power.

- As John says, all that was made was made through him and without him was nothing was made (Jn 1:3).
- Psalm 24:1–2: *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.*
- Colossians 1:16: *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.*

(b) Providence upholds and directs all things by his sovereign will.

- Daniel 4:24: *...he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”*
1. All things are upheld by his sovereign will.
 - Colossians 1:17: *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

⁴ Powlison, “The Classical Model,” 90.



2. All things are directed by his sovereign will.
 - Ephesians 1:11: *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will...*

3. All the work of Satan and his demonic forces are governed by his sovereign will.
 - Therefore, even in the face of dark spiritual forces, the Christian looks forward with hope. As Albert Mohler has said, *"For the Christian, optimism is naïve, but pessimism is atheistic."*

II. Satan is a creature of God

- Ephesians 6 says, we wrestle "the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"

(a) Satan is a creature.



(b) Satan is a liar.

- Sinclair Ferguson: *"Thus the lie was an assault on both God's generosity and his integrity. Neither his character nor his words were to be trusted. This, in fact, is the lie that sinners have believed ever since—the lie of the not-to-be-trusted-because-he-does-not-love-me-false-Father."*⁵
- John 8:44: *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*
- John 10:10: *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.*

(d) Satan is accountable to God.

III. Human beings are accountable to God

(a) Human beings are morally responsible.

(b) Human beings are held accountable.

⁵ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ*, 69.



- Ephesians 2:1-3: *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

IV. Christ has decisively defeated Satan on the cross

Conclusion: A definition

Definition: Spiritual warfare is our fight to stand firm against this-worldly darkness—the world, the flesh, and the devil—in the power of Christ.