

THE EVANGELICAL'S GUIDE TO

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE

SCRIPTURAL INSIGHTS  
AND PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION ON  
FACING THE ENEMY

CHARLES H. KRAFT



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*I dedicate this book to my friend and mentor John Wimber, in gratefulness to God for the miracle that He performed through John in leading this evangelical into a powerful version of Christianity. As a lifelong evangelical, I enjoyed my relationship with Jesus. But I always felt that there was more to Christian faith than I was experiencing. Listening to John and seeing how God used him did the trick. I have not been the same since January 1982, when God used John to change my worldview and then to change my practice. We all miss John, but I will never stop praising God for bringing him across my path.*



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# Foreword

I began reading a digital version of the manuscript of this book as I flew back from Malaysia. I had just finished teaching a three-day seminar on spiritual warfare to about three hundred church leaders. As I read, I found myself reflecting on the many ways Charles Kraft had shaped what I had just taught and the profound impact he has had on my own life over the years.

I had read Chuck's book *Christianity with Power* in 1991, but I first met him in person at a conference on spiritual warfare in Southern California in February 1994. I was there because I hoped to learn some things that would help me with the course on spiritual warfare I was teaching at Asbury Theological Seminary. I had never taught a course on the subject and knew very little about it. But because of what God had recently done in my own life and the direction the Spirit was leading, I believed such a course was needed in preparing Christian leaders. So that spring semester I stepped out and offered it.

Much to my surprise, almost a hundred students signed up! Realizing I was in way over my head, I told them the first evening we met that I was not qualified to teach the class, but we would learn together as we went. A few weeks later, I flew out to California for the conference, hoping to learn all I could and meet some people who could help me. That is where I was introduced to Chuck one morning at breakfast.

## Foreword

Then a few months later, he visited our seminary campus in Kentucky to speak at our School of World Mission. He also came to the class I was teaching. But Chuck wanted to do more than just speak. He wanted to minister to students. And it was during those days that I got to work with him as he engaged in healing prayer ministry—especially deliverance ministry—with several of our students. I had never seen anyone minister like he did in such an authentic, credible and pastoral way. What he modeled for me during those days changed my life. Soon afterward, I found myself involved in a similar kind of ministry with seminarians.

Over the years since then, I have connected with Chuck at several conferences and read almost every one of his books. So much of his understanding and practice of spiritual warfare has now become an integral part of my own approach. We do not always agree. His understandings and practices are often different from mine. Sometimes he makes the systematic theologian in me wince! But no one has shaped and influenced me the way he has.

I often tell students they need to make spiritual warfare *one* of the strings on their ministry guitar. It should not be the *only* string, but certainly should be *one* of them. It is firmly rooted in Scripture and the Christian tradition, an important dimension of the Christian life and often needed in the practice of ministry. The guitar definitely plays better and sounds better with this string on it.

Unfortunately, for most of us evangelical Christians in the West, because of our longtime captivity to the naturalistic worldview of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, the spiritual warfare string has been noticeably missing. Since the mid-1980s, Chuck, a lifelong evangelical himself, has been on a mission to help us put that string back on our guitar.

The book that you hold in your hands will definitely help you do that. Here you will find a wonderful compilation of all his writings and his seasoned, best thinking on a wide range of topics related to spiritual warfare. Surely, it is the best of the best of Charles Kraft!

Whether you are a spiritual warfare novice or a seasoned veteran, get ready, then, to be informed and inspired, encouraged and challenged. It is a fitting testament to Chuck's faithful and fruitful life and ministry.

Stephen A. Seamands, professor of Christian doctrine,  
Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky

# Acknowledgments

I want to give special thanks to my editor, Christianne Squires, for carefully going over every word. This is a much better book because of her painstaking attention to the little things. And I am grateful to work again under Jane Campbell's supervision. She and Christianne made the final editing a pleasant experience.



# Introduction

The central theme of Christianity is love. “God so loved the world . . .” (John 3:16) is the central verse of the Scriptures. All else in Scripture and life is founded on this one great central theme. We are even told that “God is love” (1 John 4:8).

So, in writing about spiritual warfare, we dare not forget that the reason for a focus on this theme is to enhance our commitment to the central love theme.

However, once we have pointed out that God’s love is the central theme, we need to recognize that there is an enemy, a very active and powerful enemy whose main commitment is to counter whatever God is doing. He is anti-love, anti-God, anti-everything God does and stands for. He hates God and uses every means at his disposal to thwart God’s activity, especially His loving relationship with His favorite creatures—us.

But many evangelicals act as if that enemy does not exist. In preaching and teaching and our daily lives, we act as if Satan and his forces are not a problem. We go about our business as if the evil in the world is explainable in some way other than that there is an enemy behind it. We emphasize the love part as we should but tend to ignore the context in which that love is expected to flourish—a context of warfare. We live in a battle zone, and we usually do not know what to do about it.

The book you have in your hands seeks to deal with the anti-love context in which we live. I focus on that anti-love context and the enemy’s activity

not because they are more important than the love message but because they have been neglected, allowing our enemy to work with little hindrance due to our ignorance.

I speak as one who has lived in an evangelical, no-spiritual-warfare type of Christianity. The church I grew up in was a sound evangelical church where I was challenged to read the Scriptures and to follow them. I was so sincere that during my high school days I got up faithfully at 5:00 a.m. to study the Scriptures and to read biographies of Christian heroes, especially of missionaries. During those days I pledged my life to become a missionary. This commitment was strengthened in Christian camp and my home church, soon leading to a focus on Africa. But there was never a solid focus on dealing with the spirit world. In fact, we learned to steer clear of hyperemotionalism and Pentecostals.

To prepare for missionary service, then, I applied to Wheaton College, the college one of my mother's cousins had attended to prepare for missionary service in Africa. I applied nowhere else. I simply assumed I would be admitted. And I was.

At Wheaton I followed the recommendation of a prospective missionary to major in anthropology, which I did. I also fell in love with a woman who agreed to marry me and go to Africa with me. But I cannot recall ever meeting a Pentecostal or charismatic there, either, or in the evangelical seminary that I attended after Wheaton. To this point, still no attention was paid to the Holy Spirit or to spiritual warfare.

In Nigeria, however, it became obvious that within my strong evangelicalism I had learned nothing to assist me in dealing with the spirit world. I asked the Nigerian leaders I was expected to help what was their most important problem. Without hesitation, they answered, "Evil spirits." It became clear, then, that I could not help them with their biggest problem.

The Lord was good, however. I was never pressed into embarrassing situations in this area. And the Nigerian leaders were able to handle things on their own. But I was left with a guilty conscience and a feeling of deep inability to help my Nigerian brothers.

We came home and were not able to return. But the Lord led me into a missionary training position at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, where I was to teach and write about issues of Christianity's relationship

with culture. Among our student body, there was a trickle of charismatic students who kept asking, “Where is the Holy Spirit?” I did not know.

In 1982, my thirteenth year of teaching at Fuller, we invited John Wimber to teach us on healing. Though it was a course for students, I decided to attend, in hopes that the course would help me to understand what was missing in my Christianity. I was not disappointed. John was not hyper-emotional. That would have put me off. He was scripturally sound and personally balanced. What he offered, I could accept and fit into that hole in my theology.

I still consider myself an evangelical, though one who believes in and practices a more biblical Christianity than I had been trained in. That part of Christianity that my mentors ignored has been filled in, both theoretically and, most importantly, in practice. I have become a practitioner of what Jesus practiced in setting captives free. Christianity is brand-new for me.

My prayer is that this book can be of help in transforming you into a more completely biblical Christian. Not all of the book is new. I have written chapters in other books on this subject, and since those chapters embody my latest thinking on the subject, I have included several of them in this book. Much of this material was taken from *Confronting Powerless Christianity, Defeating Dark Angels, I Give You Authority* and my chapter in *Spiritual Power and Missions*.

To counter this ignorance, we need to deal solidly with our basic assumptions. These make up our worldview. I have written comprehensively about worldview in my book *Worldview for Christian Witness*<sup>1</sup> but summarize some of that material here to alert us to a basic problem that affects us as we attempt to move from ignorance to understanding in this area.

I also deal with the very important subject of experience. The enemy has no problem with those who believe in his existence but do not practice against him. He has the most trouble with those who have correct assumptions and oppose him actively—those who believe he is alive and well and who practice setting people free from satanic captivity.

Jesus was a practitioner, and He expects us to be practitioners as well. He expects us to fill His shoes in today’s world by freeing captives from

1. Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2008).

## Introduction

the enemy's clutches. Let this book, then, be a call to action, a call to participate in the warfare that made up so much of Jesus' life and ministry. It is not enough to know the truth academically. We need to know it in practice. That kind of knowledge and experience is the kind of love Jesus has called us to incarnate.

There are two major events in a Christian's life—salvation and freedom. Millions of God's people are saved but not free. But as the apostle Paul points out, it is freedom that God calls us to—freedom beyond salvation (see Galatians 1:4; 5:1). A major aim of this book is to enable God's people to bring freedom to those who are saved but still in captivity. May God bless you richly as you read and apply what you learn.

Charles H. Kraft  
Pasadena, California  
February 2015

Part 1

Introduction to  
**SPIRITUAL  
WARFARE**

An abstract graphic consisting of several overlapping, wavy, translucent bands in shades of light gray and white, creating a sense of movement and depth. The bands flow across the lower half of the page, partially overlapping the title text.



# 1

## A Concern for Spiritual Warfare

Recently, I attended a two-day gathering of evangelical leaders where a series of presentations was made with the aim of instructing and challenging the leaders to greater effectiveness in their ministries. The leaders would all claim to be biblical, but not a word was said to help us challenge Satan. To that group of evangelical leaders, it is as if the enemy does not exist, as if the softer themes of love and faithfulness are all there is to focus on in ministry, as if the considerable amount of attention Jesus, our model, gave to challenging and defeating this enemy was not to be imitated.

But there is another group of evangelicals just as committed to the softer themes but also concerned about what the enemy is doing and what we need to do to confront and defeat him. These leaders have been awakened by the many books and seminars that have come into existence recently. They recognize that our enemy is alive and well and very active in our world and even in our churches. This group has discovered that we do not have to become weird to be concerned about spiritual warfare.

The fairly recent cooling of the historical antipathy of evangelicals toward Pentecostals has opened many of us up to learning from Pentecostals and charismatics. We have even been named. We are called the Third Wave. We have been learning to take more seriously than evangelicals usually do the spiritual power aspects of biblical Christianity. Jesus predicted, “Those who believe in me will do what I do” (John 14:12). We note that what Jesus did and predicted we would do includes challenging Satan in spiritual warfare.

My experience as a “card-carrying evangelical” is a case in point. I was led through a paradigm shift and a practice shift into power ministry,<sup>1</sup> which has transformed my life and allowed me to work with God to bring spiritual freedom to hundreds of God’s children.

One of the authors who has awakened many is Frank Peretti, through his books *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. With regard

to him, the question in many people’s minds is, Since Peretti’s books are fiction, how well does his portrayal of spiritual warfare correspond to what happens in real life? The answers given to this question, then, divide us into two camps: those with experience dealing with the spirit world and those without experience.

My thirty-plus years of working in spiritual warfare, during which I have ministered to several hundred demonized people, leads me to grant a high degree of credibility to Peretti’s picture of the spirit world. He portrays a very active, well-organized realm of evil spirits—a realm assumed by the authors of Scripture. He then imagines what goes on between the spirits that inhabit that realm—evil spirits and angels of God—and human beings. He clearly describes the great evil power that operates as satanic conspiracy and the attempts of the evil spirits to defeat God by thwarting and attacking the people of God and their institutions. He observes the need for partnership between humans and God to counter that power. He correctly views prayer

**I grant a high degree of credibility to Peretti’s picture of the spirit world.**

1. For more information on power ministry, see Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Your Worldview and Your Experience of the Supernatural* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2005). (Originally published Ann Arbor, Mich.: Vine, 1989.)

as an act of warfare and the primary means of obtaining the spiritual power that enables us to attack the enemy and win.

Many, especially those coming from a theological perspective, have tried to discredit Peretti.<sup>2</sup> These critics usually have had no experience in dealing with the spirit world. Those with experience join me in recognizing that Peretti knows better than his critics what he is talking about.

So, when evangelicals ask me how to gain insight into what is going on in the spirit world, I frequently recommend reading *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*. Though Peretti uses imagination to construct his stories, he offers great insight into what probably goes on in the invisible spirit world. He knows what he is dealing with and deserves to be taken seriously.

Other helpful books have also sprung up recently. Just to mention my own, I have written *Christianity with Power; Confronting Powerless Christianity; I Give You Authority; Deep Wounds, Deep Healing; Defeating Dark Angels; Behind Enemy Lines; The Rules of Engagement* and *Two Hours to Freedom*. You can also find an extensive list of resources in the bibliography at the end of this book.

## Is It Right for Us to Ignore This Topic?

For generations, spiritual power issues have “belonged” to Pentecostals and charismatics. We evangelicals have tended to reject such concerns and connect them to emotionalism and going overboard on tongues, prophecy and other gifts of the Spirit. We take a more rational, less emotional approach that we claim is more biblical than Pentecostal emotionalism. Though our major doctrines are pretty much the same as those of the Pentecostals, we consider ourselves more composed, more reason-oriented and less emotional. “We know. We don’t need to feel,” we say, “for feelings will mislead us.”

Typical of our attitude is the response of an evangelical pastor I once asked about demons. I said, “If demons exist, would you rather know or

2. See, for example, Robert Guelich, “Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti,” in *Pneuma* 13 (1991): 33–64.

not know?” He answered, as probably most evangelicals would if they were being honest, “I’d rather not know!” He was living rather comfortably in a kind of Christianity quite unlike that of Jesus.

Jesus’ Christianity had a lot of room for demons. Yes, His was a message of love. But it was also a message of freedom, recognizing that many people are in captivity both to sin and to Satan. His mandate was to free them from that captivity (see Luke 4:18). And just before Jesus left the earth, He promised that anyone who has faith in Him would do the works He was doing here on earth (see John 14:12).

When Jesus left the world, He gave us the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit lives within us, then, in the spirit world we are like elephants and demons are like mice. The myth is that elephants are terrified by mice. They run when they see them, even though elephants have much more power than mice. Mice win in their encounters by bluff, not by power. They bluff elephants into fear.

So it is with us. The enemy easily bluffs us into fearing evil spirits, even though we carry infinitely more power than satanic “mice.” We choose to be ignorant rather than to challenge our enemy, though he terrorizes our people. We fear, giving the enemy a victory he should not have. We have enough to do, we say, dealing with other aspects of our message and mission without opening this can of worms. The result, though, is a sub-biblical Christianity—a Christianity without power, a secular Christianity so affected by Western secular assumptions that we deny in practice, if not in theory, the existence of the invisible supernatural world. But our people are looking for a faith with power as well as insight. Our worldview is a basic problem here, and we will deal with this worldview in the following chapters.

Evangelical theologians, to the extent that they deal with the spirit world at all, tend to spend their time discussing whether or not demons exist today. Often they follow liberal thinking by suggesting that what the New Testament portrayed as demons was merely a pre-scientific understanding of what we know now were psychological problems. Many pastors join them, eliminating spiritual warfare from their agendas. In addition, evangelical scholars and pastors have bought into the secular assumption that emotional problems are all psychological, not spiritual. The result of

such assumptions is that Jesus is trusted when He talks about love or sin but not when He assumes demonic influence, as He often did.

But should we not assume that Jesus is as right about demons as He is about love and sin? Could it be that people in our churches are inhabited by demons, as they were in the synagogues of Jesus' day? Is it right to assume that Jesus' war against satanic emissaries is over? Did Jesus rid the world of demons once and for all? Or are demons smart enough to keep themselves hidden from people who question their existence, lest Christians wake up to the power they have and start using it?

We notice that some go to excess. Some blame everything on demons and avoid their own responsibility for their actions. "The devil made me do it" is their way of explaining aberrant behavior. We do not want to be associated with people like that. We do not want a reputation of believing what they believe and behaving like them. Some of us would rather turn away from this area that was important to Jesus than to be labeled Pentecostal or charismatic.

But Jesus knew something we may not. He could see that the world is full of spirits, many of them on Satan's side, whose job is to make life as difficult as possible for the followers of Jesus. And He showed us what to do about it. He did not treat demonization as a psychological problem. Psychological problems do not talk to us. Demons do.

**Should we not assume that Jesus is as right about demons as He is about love and sin?**

Jesus was not simply accommodating to a pre-scientific worldview that believed psychological problems were demonic beings. He saw what I have called "capital R" Reality (God's reality) and acted accordingly. He knew that there are alien beings who serve Satan, hate humans and actively disrupt whatever they can. He knew that these beings were very much a part of His world. They are also an active part of our world.

With Jesus on our side, do we do well to fear or ignore this area? No. We should not approach this area fearfully. But we do need to learn a few things. We have all the power of God on our side—much more power than our enemy has. But there are rules of engagement. Jesus did not go into battle unprepared. Nor dare we. There is help. And we do not have to

become like the hyperemotional, weird ones who—so unlike Jesus—make spiritual warfare look so distasteful to us evangelicals.

## The Bible Does Not Ignore It

The Bible has a lot to say about Satan and demons. These issues are taken very seriously throughout Scripture. Throughout the Old Testament, the evil kingdom is always lurking in the background and affecting what goes on in the human realm. Each of the kings of Israel and Judah were evaluated as good or bad on the basis of what each did with the satanic strongholds called “high places.” They were not simply graded on a human scale. They left as their legacy what they did spiritually. That is what the biblical authors considered most important.

Satan is not omnipresent. He has to depend on his principalities, powers, rulers and ground-level demons to carry out his plans (see Ephesians 6:12). Whether in the Garden of Eden or afflicting Job, whether through activities during Israel’s wars or by influencing Israel’s kings and the pagan nations, these messengers of evil have been the agents of Satan.

In the New Testament, ground-level demonic spirits influenced those who killed the babies when Jesus was a child (see Matthew 2:16–18). Though Satan himself confronted Jesus in the wilderness (see Luke 4:1–13), he was undoubtedly accompanied by a host of demonic spirits. Satan and his minions were very active when Jesus was on earth. We frequently see Jesus exposing and casting them out. Satanic beings must have been behind the Pharisees and the other Jewish leaders as they developed their opposition to Jesus.

We see demonic beings visible in many of the events recorded in the book of Acts (e.g., Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1–11; the demonized slave-girl, Acts 16:16–18) and in activities recorded throughout the epistles and Revelation (e.g., the table of demons, 1 Corinthians 10:21; the blinding of those who do not believe, 2 Corinthians 4:4; the teachings of demons, 1 Timothy 4:1; and many of the activities recorded in the book of Revelation). The apostle Paul summarizes the situation as follows: “For our struggle is 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” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV).

Jesus and the other New Testament personages took Satan and his hosts seriously, but they were not alarmed by the satanic kingdom or its activities. They did not fear evil spirits. They were not impressed by them at all. When confronted, they dealt with them matter-of-factly, knowing that God's Kingdom and His power are infinitely greater. They acknowledged the existence of these evil spirits and used the power of the Holy Spirit to fight them.

The satanic kingdom wants us to fear it. But when we realize how little power that kingdom has when compared to the power of God, very little fear is left. We should respect Satan and demons and never take them lightly, but most of what looks like power on their part is either deceit or bluff or both. They really have little more power than that given them by the person they inhabit. If that person's will is engaged against the demons in partnership with Jesus—usually with the help of someone else—it is only a matter of time before the demons must go. A struggle may take place at first if the person's will is not yet on God's side or if he or she has a lot of inner healing work to do. But as soon as the person is willing to deal with their inner work and someone knowledgeable helps them, the tough part is over.

Speaking about the Kingdom of God and demonstrating the power that is its hallmark were among the most important things Jesus did. He pointed to this power when He stated that His driving out demons “proves that the Kingdom of God has already come to you” (Luke 11:20). Jesus clearly operated in God-anointed spiritual authority and power. He came to defeat Satan both during His life and through the cross and resurrection. He ministered in power, defeating the enemy every time He took him on. A major part of the gospels is devoted to accounts of the authority and power demonstrations that characterize Jesus' battles with the enemy.

Jesus made it plain that He wanted His followers to minister in His power and authority. During His earthly ministry, He conferred on His apostles (see Luke 9) and the 72 (see Luke 10) the “power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases” (Luke 9:1). With this authority and power, Jesus' followers were to heal the sick and let people know that “the Kingdom of God has come near” (Luke 10:9). Then Jesus said to the disciples and to us, “As the Father sent me, so I send you” (John

20:21). His intent was that His followers imitate His approach to witness, accompanying words with power (see Acts 1:8).

**Jesus made it plain that He wanted His followers to minister in His power and authority.**

From Matthew 28:20, we learn that Jesus meant for His followers to pass along to their followers the things He had taught them. He stated that they were to teach their followers “to obey everything [He had] commanded [them].” He then promised, “Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12 NIV). We can assume that doing what Jesus has been doing includes exercising His power to deal with demons. So let’s turn our attention to a deeper reflection on what this means.