

Warfare Witness

'Warfare Witness offers sane biblical guidance for Christian engagement in the invisible war that rages between God and the Devil. In contrast to many misguided strategies for spiritual warfare—one thinks of spiritual mapping, words of knowledge, binding demons, and the like—Stan Gale shows what the Bible really teaches about the attacks of Satan and defending against them. His approach to spiritual warfare is centered on Christ, rooted in church history, and focused on the ordinary means of grace that the Holy Spirit uses to save people in Christ: prayer and the ministry of God's Word.'

Philip Graham Ryken

Senior Minister, Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia
Bible Teacher, Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals

'Stan Gale reminds us that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not a Gospel of peace and joy only, but of the Kingdom of God, and power for living, and an advancing reign of righteousness, peace, and joy which we are privileged to enter and to proclaim. Here are the believer's marching-orders in the spiritual warfare. This book will shake up your understanding of the Christian life and point you toward an exhilarating mission of seeing God work in you in ever-new and ever more surprising ways. Read this book; but don't just read it: take up the challenge Dr Gale holds out to us. As he assures us from the Word of God, the adversary, though formidable, is bound, and all his house is open for the plundering.'

T. M. Moore

Pastor of Teaching Ministry,
Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church, Knoxville

Warfare Witness

Contending with Spiritual Opposition
in Everyday Evangelism

Stanley D. Gale

CHRISTIAN FOCUS

Unless otherwise indicated Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright ©2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Stanley D. Gale 2005

ISBN 1-84550-079-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This edition published in 2005
by
Christian Focus Publications Ltd.,
Geanies House, Fearn,
Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Alister MacInnes

Printed and bound by
CPD, Wales

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a license permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licenses are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Foreword	11
Preface	13
Introduction	17

I Enlistment

1 Commissioned for Service	25
2 This Present, Evil Age	39
3 Kingdom Conflict	53
4 Unmasking the Enemy	65

II Equipment

5 Plundering Christ's Spoils	83
6 Spiritual Weapons	97
7 The Weapon of Prayer	113
8 Wielding Spiritual Weapons	133

III Engagement

9 The Theatre of Operations	153
10 Rules of Engagement	165
11 Flying the Colors of the Cross	183
12 Battle Ready	199
Epilogue: Barracks to Battlefield	217
Notes	220

Stanley D. Gale has been married to his wife, Linda, since 1975. They have four children. He holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Education degrees from the University of Delaware, a Master of Divinity degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America and has served his current charge in West Chester, Pennsylvania since 1988. He has written a number of articles and taught in the area of practical theology. In 2002 he launched a ministry of prayer-based outreach called Community Houses of Prayer with the publication of *Community Houses of Prayer Ministry Manual: Reaching Others for Christ through Strategic Prayer* (Deo Volente Publications). The following year he developed a website (www.CHOPministry.net) to provide support for those starting and leading that ministry in their local settings.

To my children,
Samantha, Luke, Sarah and Nathan,
whom God has used to keep me on my toes
and on my knees.

Acknowledgements

I owe special thanks to Phil Douglass for his turning my attention to the subject of spiritual warfare in evangelism, to T. M. Moore for his godly example and instruction, and to Archie Parrish for teaching me much about prayer and spiritual opposition. I am especially indebted to my congregation for supporting me in the writing of this book. I have greatly appreciated Larry Woodruff for his continual encouragement to bring this book to print. I am grateful to Don Nicholson for his provision of a place conducive to writing and for his living illustration of kingdom kindness.

Finally, I would like to express my indebtedness to Willie MacKenzie and Christian Focus Publications for their investment in this work, and especially to Philip Ross for his helpful suggestions and patient editorial work that made for a much improved book.

Foreword

As this fine book was in preparation, Stanley Gale's country and her allies were at war in Iraq. The critical early days of that war, like other recent conflicts, appeared nightly on the television screens of virtually every home in the western world and beyond. Yet it is only when we pass through extra security measures at an airport, pay more to fill up the fuel tank in the car, or—most poignantly of all—watch the flag-draped coffin of a young man being borne to its resting place by his comrades, that we feel the war encroaches on life in the homeland. The daily routine for most of us seems largely the same. The war is on, but it is 'somewhere out there'. Such is the reality of our times.

But these events serve as an allegory for the church. We are at war, engaged in a mighty spiritual battle. But this war, as Stanley Gale reminds us, is being fought in the homeland. Indeed, it seems a latter day Trojan horse is already within the gates. Enemy activity is already present within the city of God. Meanwhile many of us sleep unaware or heedless of the call to wrestle with principalities and powers, the forces of spiritual darkness in the heavenly realm. For Christ is building his church in territory occupied by forces antagonistic to his kingdom. We are confident they will not prevail. Yet if we are to remain standing against their onslaughts and ultimately share in Christ's victory, we must learn—as Paul encourages us—that our weapons are not material but spiritual.

It is just here that Stanley Gale provides us with wise counsel, well rooted in Scripture and dispensed from a concerned pastoral heart. He helps us to think about our Christian witness in the world; he underlines the importance of our fellowship

in the church. He calls us to recognize the importance of prayer. In doing so, he ‘scratches where we itch’. More than that, he painfully exposes a festering wound in the life of many churches where gatherings for corporate prayer, if they even take place, are often the most sparsely attended. Without realizing what has happened, we have been disarmed and, indeed, deeply wounded. And perhaps the most severe blow of all is that the weapon John Bunyan (using Paul’s language) called ‘All-prayer’ has been snatched from our grasp without us feeling the loss.

We need someone with a concern for the church and a pastor’s love for it to speak to us about these things. This is exactly what Stanley Gale does. In addition to giving helpful counsel on such themes as personal witness, the life of fellowship, prayer, and other vital themes, he sounds the reveille in our ears to awaken us to serve with renewed vigour in the King’s army.

I hope that his counsel will be a significant help to many and that all will heed his call.

*Sinclair B Ferguson
Westminster Theological Seminary
Dallas, Texas*

Preface

Though this world with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
Were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing.
For still our ancient foe,
doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate.

Those are words from Martin Luther's sixteenth century hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress.' They speak of a worldview, a perspective on life that knows of a spiritual dimension, fraught with danger—a world in which we live, grow, and serve.

In this world, as children of God and soldiers of the cross, we face opposition, both in our growth in spiritual maturity and our work for the cause of Christ. Satan desires our demise. He seeks to thwart us at every turn, standing against us because we stand with Christ.

Not only do we find in these words a worldview with a spiritual realm and a theology of spiritual conflict, we discover a theology of victory. We are reminded where our victory is found. Jesus Christ came into this world to destroy the works of the devil. The Son of God became incarnate as a human being to deliver us from evil and to usher us into his eternal kingdom of righteousness, joy, and peace.

Yet our enemy, the devil, continues to this day to oppose us. We are no match for him. Our strength is in the Lord and his mighty power. Satan, the prince of this age, cannot depose him who sits on the throne, alive, as one crucified. Neither angels nor demons can ultimately harm us who repose in him. Yet

while we are in this world, we experience and encounter him whose craft and power are great, and fueled by cruel hate for Christ and for us who know and serve him.

But what does it mean that devils oppose us? What do they look like? What are their tactics to oppose us? How do we deal with them?

God has not left us without instruction on the subject of the spiritual opposition we face and how we are to wage spiritual warfare. In fact, the Bible is full of the counsel of God to equip us for the task. Spiritual conflict forms the backdrop against which we understand life, the work of Christ, and our work of ministry in this present age.

When we open God's Word in the beginning, we find ourselves stationed at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, looking on to witness the encounter of the serpent with Adam and Eve. There we witness his tactics. His counsel betrays his intentions. We are granted access that Job himself did not enjoy into the throne room of the Sovereign Lord Almighty, where we are privy to the celestial conversation of Satan seeking the permission of God for his nefarious intent. We may be surprised to see that God grants that permission! At the same time we wonder at the relationship of the holy and all-good God to a fallen angelic being known as the evil one. In the book of Zechariah we are shown Joshua the high priest standing before the throne of God. Our gaze is directed to God's right hand where we see Satan leveling accusations against Joshua. Clearly, our God wants us take note of something, both about Satan and about God himself who acts for his own.

It is for good reason we are informed that 'our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.' Our alertness heightens as we realize that prowling ground is where we live. We shift nervously as our Lord Jesus makes us aware that 'Satan has asked' to sift Peter as wheat. But Peter finds protection in the intercession assured him by Christ. Does that apply to us as well? It is not without purpose that Jesus identifies Satan as the culprit, the thief of the seed of the gospel sown in the hearts of those hearing. How do we deal with his thievery, knowing that the seed of the gospel is spread from our hand?

In these and a multitude of other scenarios and explanations, God is giving us a profile of our enemy and a feel for life in his

shadow. In so doing, his intention is not to create intrigue or to satisfy morbid curiosity. Rather, God is equipping us for kingdom living and service in ‘this world with devils filled’. In our spiritual growth and in our kingdom work we will face a foe. We will have to contend with his opposition. But what does that opposition look like and how do we deal with it?

Pick up a popular book on the subject and you will get answers to these questions, answers that claim to reflect God’s teaching in his holy Word. More than likely you will be instructed to bind the devil and how to go about it. You may be armed with figurative spectacles of faith by which you can detect the enemy, just as infrared goggles allow soldiers to see the enemy through the veil of darkness. Fascinating stories may be told and Scripture brought to bear in support of the stories’ messages.

The question is, do these popular writings accurately reflect the perspective God gives us on the subject? Do these popular writings fit us with God’s plan and provisions for addressing the spiritual opposition to which he alerts us? Or, like Saul putting his adult armor on the boy David, are we provided with the way that seems right, but it will not profit us for engagement with the enemy in God’s way?

Spiritual warfare is a popular topic. No shortage of books address the subject. Most, however, seem to approach the topic from a perspective that steps over the boundaries of biblical precept. Often, Scripture is brought to serve fanciful ideas of demonic hierarchy, devilish monikers, and spiritual assault. Rather than developing the important topic of spiritual warfare from a biblically-founded, biblically-balanced view, it is drawn from extra-biblical ideas, with God’s Word brought to the service of human notions.

While most popular literature on the subject tends to excess, the Reformed camp has tended to neglect. The former rightly lays hold of the reality and activity of spiritual opposition to the work of evangelism, but carries it to biblically unwarranted extremes. The latter also recognizes the legitimacy of spiritual opposition to the evangelistic endeavor, but then for all practical purposes ignores it. The sobriety and biblical studiousness of such seventeenth century Puritan works as William Gurnall’s *The Christian in Complete Armour*, Thomas Brooks’ *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, Isaac Ambrose’s *The Christian*

Warrior, and John Bunyan's *The Holy War* has been conspicuously missing in our day.

This book seeks to understand and address the spiritual opposition believers face in reaching others for Christ with data and direction drawn from God's Word rather than brought to it. Specifically, we will address spiritual opposition for the work of gospel witness to which our Lord Jesus Christ calls us. There will be overlap in understanding and dealing with spiritual opposition in our sanctification. The enemy we face in our growth in Christ is the same enemy we face in our service to Christ. His goals and tactics are similar. But our concern will be to address spiritual warfare in our every day encounters with others for the sake of the gospel. As is the case with the popular literature, so is the case here: what is presented should be held up to the plumb line of God's Word. Only that which survives biblical scrutiny is worthy of embrace and provides firm ground on which to gain solid footing for spiritual battle.

Did we in our own strength confide,
 Our striving would be losing;
 Were not the right Man on our side,
 The Man of God's own choosing;
 Dost ask who that may be?
 Christ Jesus, it is He;
 Lord Sabaoth, his name,
 From age to age the same,
 And he must win the battle.

Jesus has won the war, as only he could. There remains, however, a battle afoot. It involves us. It qualifies our life and mission. It directs our efforts and maps out our plan of attack. Let us seek to understand it that we might give glory to the incarnate Lord of Hosts as we serve under the banner of his victorious and eternal kingdom.

Introduction

‘Well, I think God helps those who help themselves. On top of that, God is full of love and compassion. He will surely smile on people as long as they make a sincere effort.’ Across the table from you sits Betty, your next-door neighbor. For months you have been working to build a relationship with her so that you can share your faith in Jesus Christ. You’ve had conversations before, but now your discussion seems to be moving to a whole new level. It’s taken some time, but Betty is sharing her deep faith convictions. How do you respond to her, preserving your relationship yet correcting her error? Do you just let loose and lay it on the line? Where does she get these ideas anyway? Exactly what are you up against as you enter her world to speak of salvation in Christ? How can you possibly be an influence for Christ in her life? What tactics and resources has God put at your disposal?

Your church has adopted a mission statement that targets a particular geographic region for outreach with the gospel of life in Jesus Christ. God’s Word informs you that the congregation will face spiritual opposition as they seek to reach the area for Christ. There are demons present, demons intent on thwarting your efforts, demons opposing you because they oppose Christ. How do you deal with this spiritual opposition? Do you offer a Sunday School class on exorcism? What strategy do you use? What battle plan do you put to work? What sort of power is involved?

Scripture leaves us with no doubt about the spiritual conflict inherent in evangelism. The description the Apostle Paul gives us clearly characterizes the work of witness as contending with spiritual opposition.

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. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Eph. 6: 12–20

Paul's mission takes place in the same plane as does ours, on this side of the fall, on this side of the cross, on the same field of battle. The enemy is the same. The nature of the conflict is the same. The goal is the same. Our God outfits us with the same weapons.

Clearly, there is spiritual opposition with which we have to deal as we reach out to Betty and as the church ventures into its targeted mission field. The question is, how do we understand that opposition and how do we engage it for the cause of Christ?

A large body of literature on the subject would have us adopt a particular tact for our work of witness. Allow me to sketch it out in a broad way.¹ First, these writers want us to recognize an army of evil forces, organized in a chain of command. One author puts it this way:

The only way I can imagine that Satan can effectively blind 3 billion minds is to delegate the responsibility. He maintains a hierarchy of demonic forces to carry out his purposes. Exactly what that hierarchy is we may never know, but we do have some general indications. Perhaps our clearest hint is found in Ephesians 6: 12 where we are

told we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against (1) principalities, (2) powers, (3) rulers of the darkness of this age, and (4) spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.²

The importance of understanding this chain of command, we are told, is so that we deal more effectively with demons in their areas of control. Presumably, the higher the rank, the greater the territory, the bigger the catch.

This literature contends that each area is presided over by a territorial demon³, one who has claim to a locality and reigns over it. It is his turf. He has hung out his sign. Spiritual warfare is typically conducted through spiritual mapping, divinely aided spiritual reconnaissance that identifies the demons in charge and traces out their formations and strongholds. Such mapping compares to calculating exact coordinates for the laser-guided precision of our spiritual weapons, so that smart bombs of binding can be launched. One writer suggests ‘we need the highest precision of aim to hit the enemy at his most vulnerable point. Wisdom in battle is to win the victory without wasting ammunition.’⁴

This spiritual mapping is pursued through corporate prayer. The idea is that once we have a divinely dispensed ‘word from God,’ we can then bind the enemy and loose the occupied territory. Leverage is gained over the territorial demons by naming them. In binding them, we are freed to enter the region with the gospel. The model of Jesus is held up for us to follow. In Luke 8: 26ff., Jesus asked the demon its name. The answer was ‘Legion.’ Just as Jesus bound the strongman (Matt. 12: 26ff.) so that his territory could be looted, so are we to go and do likewise. Our binding and loosing are accomplished through agreement in prayer (Matt. 18: 18ff.).

In this approach, the Bible is appealed to, but are the conclusions the Bible’s? While doing the church great service in sounding the battle cry for spiritual warfare in evangelism, some of these writers have overstepped the bounds drawn for them by Scripture. In some cases, seeds of biblical truth have been developed to grow up into plants of a different species. In other cases, the wheat of valid, biblically-founded points is intermingled, and even overgrown, with the weeds of unbiblical error or caricature. At least three overlapping reasons make the conclusions suspect and raise considerable cause for

caution, all of which are pathways leading away from the firm foundation of God's written revelation into the quicksand of fanciful imaginations and machinations.

First is the tendency on the part of some writers to look for understanding and direction beyond the pages of Holy Scripture, which God himself assures us is sufficient for all of doctrine and life. One way this tendency is expressed is to give experiential anecdote authoritative legitimacy with biblical revelation. What that means is, if we see it happen, that must be the way it works. The literature abounds with personal stories used to establish, buttress or validate concepts. Instead of interpreting experience by biblical precept, it is often given equal (or even more real and relevant) footing as the traditions of men over the Word of God.

Another way extra-biblical revelation is seen is in the frequent use the literature makes of phrases like 'God told me.' Immediate revelations from God and 'words of knowledge' are common elements in gaining spiritual discernment for conducting spiritual warfare. Fresh revelation provides ability to spiritually canvas a city or region and determine the spirits at work. Or, it may be that direct revelation from God allows us entrance into a person's life. We find examples of evangelists remarkably learning something hidden in a person's heart, exposing it in his or her hearing, with the result of that person professing faith—a profession even without benefit of the presentation of the gospel, but on the sheer glamour of revelation of the once-hidden secret. The result is some sort of faith, but faith in what?

The second pitfall is method of interpretation. In some cases a whole theology seems to be built on the use of a single term or on some inherent mysticization of Greek, the original language of the New Testament scriptures. Is it true that the Greek word for 'wilderness' is known as territory of Satan, into whose turf Jesus moved for spiritual warfare? Are the semantic domains of certain words such that we are justified in using interchangeably the terms 'overcome,' 'conquer,' or 'bind' when we describe our activity in taking the offense against the enemy in spiritual warfare? Do words mean all things they could in all cases, regardless of context?⁵ Is one of the key texts for understanding the 'territoriality of spirit beings' founded on a Dead Sea scroll discovered in Cave 4 at Qumran, where

we really learn that Deuteronomy 32: 8 speaks of God setting the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the angels of God rather than the children of Israel? Does the Greek word *kairos* mean a 'divinely appointed time' that intercessors must seek to discern rather than simply 'time'? Is the Greek word *rhema* to be regarded as 'a more immediate word from God which we do not find in the 66 books of the Bible.'⁶

Furthermore, we find interpretive gymnastics in the practice of uttering biblical words as magical incantations or using words or phrases in a superstitious way because of their indefiniteness.

One minute past midnight...we started our prayer actions near KGB headquarters. We had received two words of knowledge from an Israeli intercessor and from a sister in Scotland, both saying that they saw us praying in a tunnel. In front of the KGB headquarters is an underground station with a walking tunnel under the square...We entered the tunnel, and no one else walked through the entire time we prayed. Here we proclaimed the Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin, the handwriting on the wall that had announced the downfall of the Babylonian Empire. We prayed, 'in the name of Jesus we bind you, power of Pharaoh, you controlling power of Assur and we lay you under the feet of Jesus. We proclaim that your grave has been prepared. We cut your influence from the root.'⁷

Sound principles of biblical interpretation that recognize the context and the propositional⁸ nature of God's revelation are often ignored, leading to a distortion of the text and unwarranted approaches to spiritual warfare in evangelism.

The third way in which the inspired text is compromised relates to the second, but warrants separate mention. Sometimes a point will be supported with reference to those portions of Scripture that are not prescriptive but descriptive. The most serious of these sorts of support are found in the call to emulate Christ in his encounters with demons. As we will explore later, WWJD ('What Would Jesus Do') is a worthy question to ask for the conduct of the Christian life. However, it is unwarranted and inappropriate to presume that we are to follow in the steps of Christ in those areas where he alone was qualified and called to tread. For example, when Jesus was led by the Spirit, following his baptism at the Jordan River, into the wilderness

to do battle with Satan, he stood alone as the second Adam. He acted as the representative of his people in confrontation with the tempter. Though we learn of our enemy's tactics and how we might stand against them from Jesus' example, we do not accomplish what he did by our actions. The same is true of Christ's binding the strongman. His work is not our example but our confidence in the work of witness. We may be called to take up our cross as did Christ, but our cross is not substitutionary or redemptive as was His.

If this popular approach does deviate from God's revealed battle plan and does pervert the approach God lays out for dealing with the spiritual opposition we surely face in evangelism, then what can we safely conclude from God's Word? That question captures our challenge in the pages ahead. We will examine three primary areas: enlistment, equipping, and engaging. Enlistment calls us to the field of battle in sober awareness of our enemy for the task of evangelism. Equipping arms us with the weapons God give us for the task and instructs us in their use. Engaging takes us to the field of battle of our everyday lives in reaching others with the gospel of life in Jesus Christ.

Some might not feel comfortable with the military concept and terminology. Yet, as will become increasingly evident, this is exactly the way our King and Commander would have us understand the nature of evangelism and approach to the work of witness, whether that witness is to Betty or to Baltimore. It involves warfare, spiritual warfare. All of us enfolded into the kingdom of God, as children of God and heirs of life, are servants of the Most High and soldiers of the cross. Together we face a common foe, for a common cause. And our Lord has not left us unaware or ill prepared.