

AN INVITATION

I hate war! The intrigue of battle is overshadowed by the sorrow of suffering. The adrenalin rush of an offensive is drained in the despair of destruction. There is not one aspect of the business of war that is "fun." It is unfair. No rules of decency are observed. Every cunning and crafty device of the enemy is brought against us in vicious assault. Mayhem and death are the objectives of the forces of evil that he sets against us.

Let us "learn war no more." Let us "beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks." Micah 4:3 "Peace, brother."

However, consider Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James as he begins his short letter, "To those who are sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied." He's on a roll, expressing the good things of the Lord.

In verse three he makes a transition: "When I had in my mind to write to you, (I was going to talk about our common salvation. I was going to sit down and write a real nice letter about how great it is to be a Christian. You know, how much fun it is to rejoice in the Lord, to relish in all the promises of the Word—to just bask in His love.) But," Jude explains, "that's the kind of letter I was going to write to you. However, when I put quill to parchment, I realized it was imperative for me to write to you an exhortation—a battle cry—that you earnestly contend for the faith. We are at war, brothers! Evil men have crept in—ungodly men who are wreaking havoc, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God." Jude 1-4

(Here, and throughout this writing, I put quotes around Scripture that has been amplified and paraphrased, or possibly abbreviated. Scripture references are always included for you to "search the Scriptures" [Acts 17:11] to see if what we have said is true.)

Likewise, the exhortation of this book, PREPARE FOR BATTLE, is given under the duress of a preference to talk about how much fun it is to be a Christian rather than it being a book to provide Basic Training in Spiritual Warfare. Yet, I feel this urgency to present some basic, practical, hands-on, Biblical instruction to prepare us for the battle that rages 1) within the soul of a Christian and 2) for the lost souls of the world.

Why? Because my hatred for the enemy of our souls is greater than my abhorrence of war.

There is a second reason for writing these pages. Among the plethora of books available on the subject of spiritual warfare, there are few that deal with basic training. There are many that deal with real and serious issues, but

they seem to be written with the assumption that the reader knows the basics. Or they limit their discussion to a very narrow aspect of spiritual warfare. Some books on the subject are based only on experiences, sometimes even stretching consistency with Scripture. Others, lacking substance, seem to exploit the bizarre. In contrast to some, yet as a basic complement to others, then, the focus of this writing explores the foundations of spiritual warfare—Armor, Weapons, Attitude, Tactics of satan, Authority, Principles of War and Strategies for Battlefield Living.

War is Declared in Heaven

For reasons with which my own sinful nature can too easily identify, Lucifer was lifted up in pride and said, "I will be like the Most High." Isaiah 14:14 Rebellion and anarchy—schemes contrary to God's will—interrupted and interposed themselves on all that would follow in human history. And Lucifer drew a host of the angels into his camp. Matthew 25:41

When time began, God created man (male and female) in His own image, and placed them in a garden. But satan, that fallen cherub, was there to find willing allies. "You will be like gods," he assured them. See Genesis 3:5.

(Here, and throughout the book, you will notice that I do not capitalize the word, satan. This is to indicate and emphasize my disdain for the enemy. Likewise, you will note that every word used in reference to the Bible is capitalized to emphasize my reverence for the Word.)

Very early in the history of man, in the story of Job, we see the adversary going back and forth throughout all the earth. God questions him: "Have you considered My servant, Job?" This word considered is a military term meaning "to look at all aspects of an attack, to strategize for an attack." The answer that satan gives confirms to us that "checking Job out for an attack" is exactly what he was doing. See Job 1:6-9.

Centuries later Jesus says to Peter, "Simon, satan desires to have you to sift you like wheat." Luke 22:31 Still later, Peter warns us to "Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." I Peter 5:8 The True Lion cautions us, "Impostors will come claiming to be messiahs and prophets and they will perform signs and wonders, to seduce and deceive, even the elect, if that were possible." Mark 13:22 These warnings speak of an inner battle.

On the other hand, Jesus identifies His mission "to proclaim liberty to the captives." Luke 4:18, quoting Isaiah 61:1. Paul summarizes his own strategy, "I have been made all things to all men so that by all means I might win some." I Corinthians 9:22 Jude ends his brief letter by telling us "to pull the

lost out of the fires of hell—out of the clutches of the enemy—hating the evil deeds of their flesh.” Jude 22-23

Thus the battle rages. The powers of darkness are using every destructive weapon in their arsenal to thwart God’s Plan of the Ages. And we are given the mandate to be on guard for ourselves and to rescue the perishing. The war declared in heaven is being waged on two fronts—in two arenas—on two levels: Inwardly, the Christian struggles against “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.” I John 2:16 And outwardly, the Christian struggles for the lost, to “open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan to God.” Acts 26:18

The Inward Battle

On one battlefield, the incessant bombardment of the enemy entices, coaxes, and tempts us with “secret thoughts to sin.” This is an inner struggle, a personal battle for the Christian to “mind the things of the flesh” rather than to “mind the things of the Spirit.” Romans 8:5

Paul, in a moment of transparency, so clearly verbalizes: “For I know that in me—that is, in my sinful nature—there dwells no good thing. I have the will to do good, but I just don’t know how to make it happen. The good that I determine to do—I don’t do. And the evil that I determine not to do, I find myself doing. I delight in the Law of God, but I see another law warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin....” This inner struggle going on in the minds of Christians caused Paul, the Apostle—and causes us—to cry out: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Romans 7:18-24

Paul saw this sinful nature clinging to him—nose to nose, arm to arm, body to body—as he carried it with him wherever he went. To comprehend the graphic nature of this illustration, we must realize that this is one way they punished murderers in those days. That’s right! They tied the dead body to the one guilty of the crime—nose to nose, arm to arm, torso to torso, leg to leg. I will let your own imagination draw this illustration to its conclusion. And after you recover, place the intensity of it to Paul’s (and our) cry for freedom from this inner struggle—from this “body of death,” our sinful nature.

The Battle For Lost Souls

In the other arena of this war, Christians are waging a battle for the salvation of lost souls. In opposition to God, some are actively fighting with satan against right. They have thrown in their lot with the diabolical schemes of the enemy to wage war against God and all that is good. They lobby to void

society of righteousness. They ridicule scientific evidence that supports creation while religiously espousing as fact a hodgepodge of contradictory theories. They rewrite history to suit their pantheistic outlook on life.

Others are held captive as prisoners of war. They are people just “going with the flow.” “Peace, brother. Live and let live!” they say, thinking that their existence begins and ends in this life only. Nothing else matters.

Then there are those lost ones who have never heard the name, Jesus. Missiologists say that there are in excess of two billion people alive today who have not even heard the Name of Jesus and another billion or so who have not had a clear, culturally-relevant presentation of the Gospel.

Prepare for Battle!

We should realize that the principles contained in this book apply equally to warfare on both fronts.

- Our armor must be on at all times.
- The weapons we use are the same whether we are battling some secret sin or wresting one of God’s precious creations out of the clutches of the enemy.
 - Our attitude toward war must be the same when fighting in either arena.
 - Our knowledge of the enemy’s tactics will equip us for battle on both levels.
 - Our exercising of spiritual authority through Christ will yield victory over sin in our own life as well as “opening the eyes” of non-Christians.
 - We must learn how to apply the principles of war to spiritual battles in both arenas.
 - Learning how to live on the battlefield will keep us by the side of our Commander-in-Chief. “Through God we shall do valiantly, for it is He Who shall tread down the enemies!” Psalm 60:12 As the giants of our day would rise up against us, with David we can say, “I come in the Name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.” I Samuel 17:45

In short, the lessons of the following chapters will give us the resources to live in the victory Christ won for us on Calvary. Thus, to the degree we walk in that victory over our inward battles, we will have the confidence to help our fellow Christians find victory in their lives. And then we will have the courage to do battle together for the souls of men and women who are lost in this sinful world.

Let’s PREPARE FOR BATTLE!

Ministering by His grace,

Neal & Yvonne Pirolo