

Introduction

The first law of intelligent spiritual warfare and effective resistance to evil is—*know your enemy*. Know who he is, what he is about, how he works, and how he can be overcome.

To use a crude but clear illustration, believers do not need to fear the supernatural any more than they would fear electricity, but they do need to understand it, respect it, and approach it lawfully.

(McCandlish Phillips¹)

It may seem strange to begin a book about the Holy Spirit with a quote on spiritual warfare, but a little background will help. I was born in 1953 to godly parents who were seeking to serve the Lord as best they knew how, ever since their marriage in 1948. Yet in their early years as a believing couple, they understood little about the Holy Spirit or about the supernatural. Then, three little children came into their lives and a spiritual battle ensued, unexpected and unwanted.

Years earlier, my maternal grandmother had entered the realm of spiritism and seances, as did many with roots in the European aristocracy. By doing so, she unwittingly opened the door to evil spirits through what was essentially participation in witchcraft. In time, my mother was able to lead her mother to repentance, but the devil is no gentleman. *Once he has an open door into a family, he will not easily allow it to be shut.* At an early age, my brother, sister, and I began to experience spiritual attacks in the night. These assaults were serious enough that my father would stay up for hours praying over us. Yet, as he explained to me years later, he was resisting forces that he did not then understand.²

As much as I loved my father's church in Blue Hill, Maine, and especially Christmas with its beautiful story of God's loving intervention in our troubled world, I understood more at the age of four or five about the reality of demons than I did about God. This left me for years with a cold, dark terror in my soul. From time to time, an evil spirit would enter my room at night, hover beside my bed, and then beckon me to leave my body behind and fly away with him. This happened several times, and I visited places that I later recognized from pictures when I was older. I especially remember a time when I was standing beside an evil spirit on the side of a town plaza in front of a church in what I later realized was Italy. I watched as people passed by us, but they had no awareness of our presence nor could they hear me call out to them. Every time I went on these journeys, I felt a suffocating sense of fear and death.

The last time a spirit entered my room like that, probably when I was five, I somehow knew that if I left my

body just one more time to go with that evil being, I would never return. *I knew that I would die.* How I knew that I could not tell you, but my parents were praying, and God was faithful. So, I said to that dark being, “No, I will not go,” and the spirit departed, never to return in that form again. Nevertheless, the deep-seated terror that these experiences produced in me was compounded when some youths tried to drown me in Massachusetts at the age of four or five, and again at the age of eight when a man tried to kill me on the street in New Haven, Connecticut. It was then that I decided that I would never cry again, no matter what happened. I simply shut down inside.

Anger, resentment, and self-hatred entered my soul over those early years and, by the age of twelve, I had developed a powerful desire to take my own life. Simon and Garfunkel’s lyric “I am a rock, I am an island,” released in 1965, became my theme song. Nevertheless, I could not entirely escape my parent’s love for God or for me, so I decided to give their God one more chance. Reading the Bible from cover to cover over the next two years, I realized by my fourteenth birthday that, if the Bible was true, I was no Christian and did not know the Lord.

Shortly thereafter, in August 1967 in Grantham, New Hampshire in a barn converted into a chapel, I confessed to God that I was a sinner and asked Jesus, *if He was indeed who the Bible said He was*, to come into my life. As I prayed that day, I had an overwhelming sense of Jesus’ presence in the room with me. Yet I was not afraid. In that moment, I knew two things with certainty: I was a sinner without excuse before God, but Jesus had just washed away all my sin and guilt. I felt like a heavy weight had been taken off my shoulders, though I did not yet cry, nor was the power