

Lord, Is this Warfare?

“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 SO “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” 1Peter 5:8

My thoughts go back to that time in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Things were going well for my growing family and spiritual warfare was hardly on my mind. Suddenly my friends and spiritual leaders began facing personal and family tragedies that I could not understand or explain.

These friends were solid Christians who had a significant impact on my family for years. Their families had been on the cutting edge of Christian ministries with great success. Through no fault of their own these friends were going through **“hell on earth”**. The stress and pain they were going through had demoralized them and even forced them out of their ministry roles.

Extremely distressed by this, I could not help but ask, “Why? Why God? Why do you allow your faithful servants to endure such pain? Why do you allow the enemy to attack them and their loved ones in such destructive ways?”

Shortly after, God seemed to answer my many questions.

It's Warfare:

We do not like to talk about it much. I understood it even much less. Along with the

topics of hell and pain, warfare is never a popular pulpit topic. But, my heavenly father felt I needed to learn some of the realities of spiritual warfare. It was late in February 1991 when I heard a message on spiritual warfare that had a significant impact on my life.

The speaker was Mr. Bob Jacks. Bob was a very successful and prosperous businessman who after becoming a Christian started a very fruitful ministry called “Your Home a Lighthouse”. His book by the same title is highly recommended. Most of the men and women gathered that day were involved in full time Christian ministry and Bob chose to talk about spiritual warfare as a warning and a challenge to them. I cannot quote him exactly but I will try to highlight what he said and why it impressed me so much.

Bob said:

*Anytime we, as Christians, seek to do something significant for God we should always expect that our spiritual enemy would be displeased. The devil will seek to fight us anytime we seek to expand God's kingdom on earth. If the devil is displeased he will seek to oppose us and attack us. When the devil fights, he fights dirty. His goal is to eliminate us from ministry. He tries to hit us where we are likely to hurt the most - **in our marriages, our children, our health and/or our finances.***

As I listened to Bob Jacks, my mind went to my friends who are struggling. I noted that his words were true in their experiences. Bob's illustration rang true as my mind raced to other Christian leaders and televangelists whose lives and ministries were destroyed in the recent past. As I listened I was gripped with concern

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White Paper: Lord Is it Warfare

for those gathered that day and how they would feel about their full time ministries. Are they the targets of the evil one? Thankfully, I was reminded by the fact that “**God did not give us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.**” *2Timothy 1:7*

Bob’s Advice:

Bob Jacks drew his listeners by referring to the 1991 Gulf War that had just ended. The allied success during that war was very impressive. In less than a few days, the belligerent Iraqi leader and his armies who taunted the world and invaded their neighbors were destroyed.

Bob went on to say:

Please picture a strapping American marine who has been training for years to go to war. He has been anxious to put all his training and skills to action. The day comes when he is called to active service. He boards the plane and lands in the Middle East. He jumps out of the plane and wasting no time he rushes to the front line. *This zealous soldier attempts to fight the battle all alone. What are his chances of success? What are the chances that he will come back alive?*

*We all know that his chances are nil. Military commanders know this full well, so they place these fighters in small groups. **Their first priority is not winning the war or killing the enemy. Their first priority is caring for each other.** Regretfully, in Christian circles we often find Christian fighters who are all alone. We send them off to mission fields where they are surrounded by evil forces and wonder why they fall victim to the evil one.*

As I thought about this, I realized that even in our own congregations and within our church walls there are pastors and Christian workers who are among the loneliest in the church. They are expected to focus on their ministries, show strength and spiritual stamina, while they feel tremendously alone. Yes, even our own

churches can be a lonely place especially for those in leadership.

Bob went on to remind his listeners that The Gulf War was not won because of mighty ground forces. The Gulf War was won because of air superiority. It was the air cover provided to those on the ground that gave them the victory in that Gulf war. It was the highflying intelligence airplanes that were in constant communication with the ground troops that gave them the upper hand. Air cover and power were the deciding advantage in that new type of warfare.

*Bob reminded us that day that **in our spiritual warfare our air cover is our prayer cover.** Prayer cover is the faithful prayer warrior who intercedes on behalf of those who are on the front lines. It is those who are in faithful communications that make the difference in our spiritual war “*against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*”.*

The picture became clear to me that day. While we are engaged in ministry we are seeking to expand the kingdom of God on this earth. We are doing this against the will of the evil one who will naturally fight us. With these thoughts in mind, I thought again of my friends who had fallen in the battle or those who were badly scarred and defeated. I began to ask some questions.

- Did they have adequate prayer cover for their tasks?
- Did those who promised to pray for them really pray?
- Do we, as Christians, understand the role of prayer cover in our lives? Do we take it as seriously as that of the intelligence officer in his highflying airplane?
- Does the Christian soldier understand the accountability he/she must have

White Paper: Lord Is it Warfare

before those who speak on his or her behalf before the throne of God?

Before my thoughts went too far I asked myself, how often do I pray for the Christian leaders and missionaries that I promised to pray for? I am an average Christian. How much time does an average Christian pray each day? Five, ten, maybe fifteen minutes a day? If they are like me by the time I finish praying for my personal needs, my work, and my family it is time to rush to daily demands that cry for my attention. No, I must confess I do not take my responsibility for providing prayer cover seriously enough. I confess I have been negligent in my roles of providing prayer cover for those who counted on me. Yes, my negligence may have caused the suffering of Christian brothers and sisters who counted on me for support and accountability.

That day in February 1991 I decided that:

1. I would never tell others that I would pray for them unless I am sure I can keep my role as a prayer cover.
2. I would never accept any ministry responsibility unless I have adequate prayer cover. Unless I have those who can commit to pray weekly for Gods guidance and protection on **my marriage, my children, my health, and my finances** I would not engage in any

Christian ministry. Unless I am ready to OBEY and be held FULLY accountable to those who pray for me I will not accept any Christian ministry.

3. I also promised that I would not encourage anyone to accept any ministry unless I ask him or her if they have adequate prayer cover.

You see, as Bob Jacks said, “Christ is not honored by fallen soldiers.”

Now you may understand why I am scared of ministry without prayer cover. These are some thoughts; I thought you might like to know.

By the way, remember:

*“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds”. **2Corinthians 10:4** So please,*

*“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”. **Ephesians 6:18***