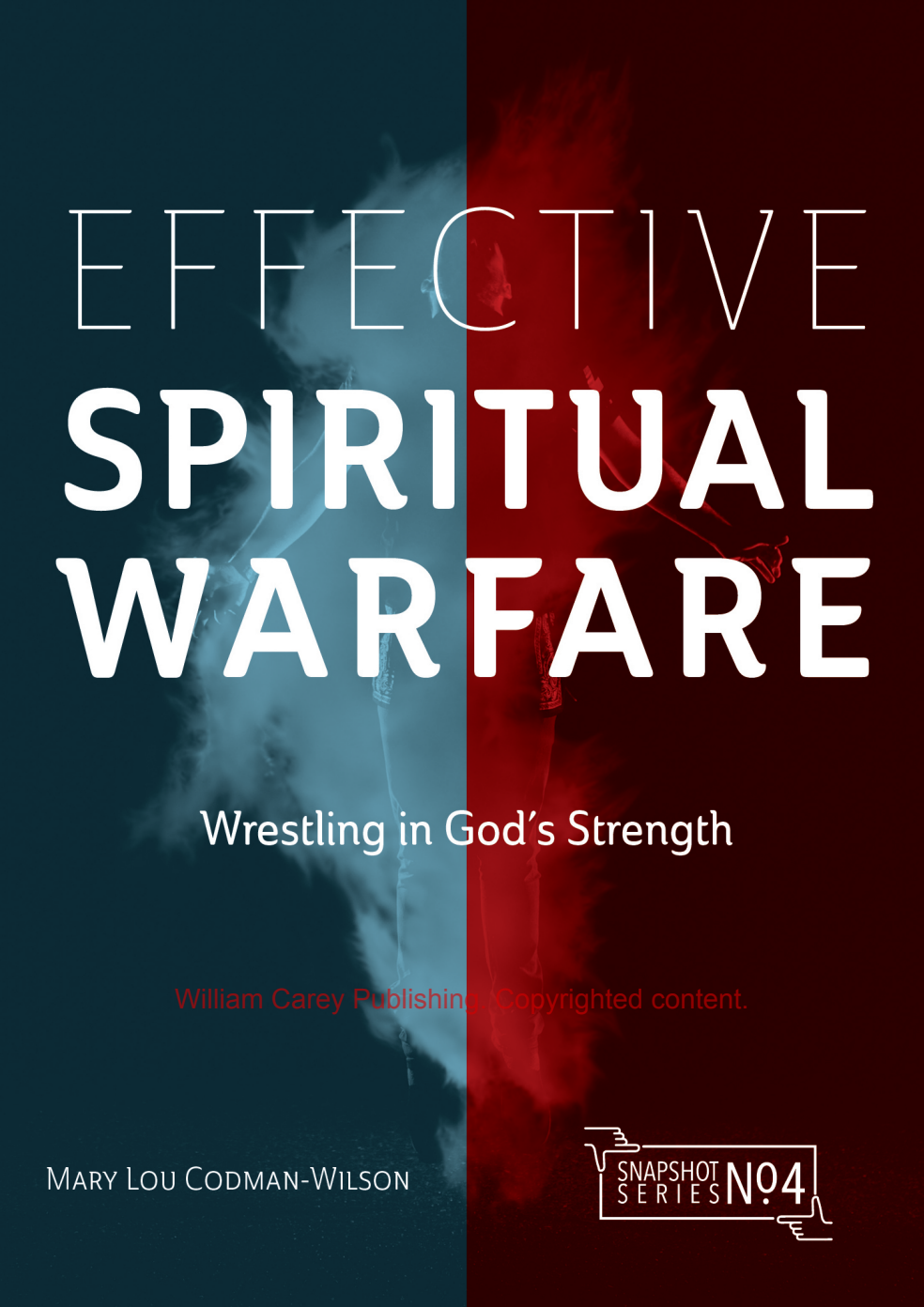


EFFECTIVE SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Wrestling in God's Strength

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Mary Lou Codman-Wilson

SNAPSHOT SERIES No.4

Effective Spiritual Warfare: Wrestling in God's Strength

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The Reality of the Spirit World*

The Bible makes it clear that the world we live in has both a material aspect—what can be seen and felt and proven by science and the senses—and an unseen spiritual world, where there is a great battle going on between the forces of God and the forces of evil. Jesus himself spoke often of Satan as the devil, the ruler of this world, a liar, an accuser, an enemy of God. Paul warned the Ephesian Christians,

> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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. (Eph 6:11–12)

John White in his classic book, *The Fight*, agrees with this biblical perspective. He says,

> When you became a Christian, a number of extremely important events took place both in heaven and in your own body. … Justification, Regeneration—i.e., God imparting to you His own

* The material in this Snapshot book was adapted and expanded from chapter 17 of *Supracultural Gospel: Bridging East and West* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2022).

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> life ... and a new relationship with the powers of darkness. ... You are now the sworn foe of the legions of hell [This theme weaves throughout his entire book. He stresses it again in the very last chapter.] To acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord is to join an army. Whether you know it or not, you are enlisted.[1]

White describes the cosmic battle all Christians are engaged in as between Jesus Christ—the "UnConquerable One" and Satan—the "Infernal Majesty." White makes clear that God's victory is sure: "The battle is the Lord's." He also explains how this battle affects the Christian's prayer life, relationships, holiness, faith, and witness.

Globally, materialists and secularists only acknowledge the material aspect of reality. Included in that group are many from the Western world who dismiss the existence of the spirit world as well. But millions of other people, both Christians and nonbelievers, understand and confront the spirit world every day. David Hesselgrave says,

> This supernatural worldview includes deities and spirit beings of all kinds, good and evil. They are usually capricious and capable of being cajoled and influenced, especially by those individuals who are privy to the "right" rituals, incantations and "medicine." The spirits of departed ancestors are of special importance. ... They tend to be approachable and beneficent and are therefore the subject of regular and special rites and prayers. Quite often a "high god" exists, but in spite of his position, he is distant and does not receive the attention accorded to the gods and spirits who are closer in daily existence.[2]

1 White, *The Fight*, 1-5, 169, 176.

2 Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 228.

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Believers need to understand the reality of the spirit world and learn how to fight against its destructive power in their lives and their countries. Therefore, a thorough introduction to effective spiritual warfare is a necessity for them. It will help them focus on the extent of Christ's victory over Satan. In Calvin Miller's book *The Singer*, he describes the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan in allegorical form. It is excerpted here in the poetic style of the entire book:

> "Stop," cried a voice within the crowd, "You are still mad," the voice continued as the Hater came out of the crowd. "Listen to me, Madman," he said, pulling out the silver pipe.
>
> Beads of perspiration appeared upon the Madman's brow. Fear tore at him—could he withstand the melody that formerly had driven him insane? The weird progression of shrieking notes began.
>
> But the Madman's tension soon began to ease. In the frustration of losing, the Hater played more loudly than before.
>
> Soon the Madman was entirely at peace. He exulted in the confidence of total sanity. "It's no use, Hater, the Troubadour has come."
>
> The crowd had grown to several hundred people and the Madman called out over them, "This man's pipe wiped out all my sanity until today. I learned a new song from the Singer for whom the world so long has waited. Listen to the Song of Life."
>
> He began to sing. The Singer himself was startled at the beauty of his voice. He sang with such confidence that none could doubt the meaning he found springing up within his soul.
>
> "Where did you learn this confidence and joy?" they asked him.
>
> He nodded toward the Singer. "He has saved me from myself and from a thousand maddened spirits from the Canyon of the Dammed."

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> "Who are you, Man?" they asked the Singer. "I am the Troubadour, the Son of Earthmaker," the Singer then replied. "I have come to save the world and close the Canyon of the Damned."[3]

One young believer in Christ tells of this encounter with evil at her parents' home in China:

> Recently I flew back to China to visit my family during winter break from my studies in the US. My parents had just moved into their new apartment and I stayed with them there. One day it was dark and raining. I was alone in the apartment when I felt an unexplainable sense of fear rise from my heart. I felt that there was something/someone in my room. My heart started to beat at high speed. I felt scared to move. My heart felt heavier and heavier, like there was a heavy stone on it. What was more, I couldn't think straight. My body was frozen. The fear paralyzed me. I desperately wanted to hide.
>
> I kept the same position for almost two minutes. When the fear and the heaviness did not go away, I realized that it might be the presence of evil in the room. So I needed to make a choice: either I would keep my frozen position in fear until my parents came back or I would stand up and fight. I made up my mind: "If I die, I die. I don't want to be passive and doing nothing when Satan attacks."
>
> I ran into the kitchen and poured cooking oil into my palm. I started to say aloud, "Jesus' blood covers me and covers this apartment." I went to the door of each bedroom and used the oil to put a cross on the door while I was praying silently in tongues. I also prayed out loud: "This apartment belongs to Jesus. In Jesus' name, I cast out all the evil spirits and destroy Satan's work." I repeated this at each door.

3 Miller, *The Singer*, 69.

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> The last door I did was the main door. As soon as I finished drawing the cross on the main door and praying in tongues, my father opened the door from outside. He was surprised that I was standing so close to the main door. But I knew it was God's timing. The heaviness and fear in my heart were gone.
>
> After this real experience, I was not as afraid anymore. I got used to running into the arms of Jesus and dared to face the oppression from Satan directly. I was telling myself, "Satan is the one who should be afraid of me, not the other way around. I have Christ's authority, which is more powerful than his. He should know I belong to Jesus and run away from me."[4]

For all believers, this confidence in Jesus's victory will be invaluable as they also confront evil in their settings. They need to know their identity and authority in Christ and learn how to recognize the presence of Satan. As Corrie ten Boom advises, "We need to recognize the enemy in order to overcome him. God wants and expects us to be conquering over the powers of darkness—not only for personal victory and the liberation of others' souls—but for His glory so that His triumph and victory over His enemies may be demonstrated."[5]

Therefore, in this book we will look first at how Jesus describes Satan, so we know whom we are fighting against. Then we will explore eight ways to claim the victory of Christ over all the various schemes of the enemy. "We would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs," says the Apostle Paul (2 Cor 2:11 ESV). When we know how to fight back, then victory can be realized.

4 Vivian Zhang, personal testimony, 2019.

5 ten Boom & Buckingham, *Tramp for the Lord*, 72.

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