

Spiritual Warfare - Two Creations Under Rival Authorities

by T. Austin-Sparks

Spiritual warfare is a conflict between the soul and the spirit, and it can only be won through faith and the submission of the soul to the Spirit.

Scripture: John 12:31, John 14:30, Ephesians 6:10

Topics: "Authority in Christ", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the reality of spiritual warfare, highlighting the conflict between two creations: the old creation governed by the prince of this world and the new creation under Christ's authority. He explains that the battle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces, urging believers to recognize the importance of their spiritual state in overcoming the enemy. Sparks illustrates how Satan operates through the soul, manipulating emotions and thoughts, while Christ works through the spirit, empowering believers to resist and defeat the adversary. The sermon calls for a deep understanding of the spiritual realm and the necessity of bringing the soul into subjection to the spirit for true victory. Ultimately, the message encourages believers to engage in spiritual discipline and faith to effectively combat the forces of darkness.

Transcript

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31).

"I will no more speak much with you, for the prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me" (John 14:30).

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might... For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10,12).

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil, and Satan the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the

authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them" (Rev. 12:7-12).

Our occupation is with the content and outworking of a little fragment from 1 Cor. 2 - "He that is spiritual." We were occupied earlier with the centre of that so far as we individually are concerned, that is, the reconstituting of believers on a spiritual principle and basis. We were really turned in on ourselves - always a difficult and sometimes a dangerous thing. But we were seeing the nature of the new creation in Christ as being solely spiritual, and our great governing statement which covers all that we have to say was, and is, that spirituality is the key to everything that is of God; and that begins with a spiritual state or a new spiritual being, brought into life by new birth. We worked that out at considerable length. What follows now is an outcome of it. We are going to turn from the inward and individual, right out to the circumference of it.

Two Creations under Rival Authorities

The Scriptures we have read touch the realm in which we are going to move. It is the circumference of spirituality. The great all-encompassing facts are these. Firstly, there are two creations active, an old and a new, which represent two kinds of man: what the New Testament calls the soul-man and the spirit-(or spiritual) man. "Now the soul-man" - that is the literal meaning of the phrase translated "natural man" in 1 Cor. 2:14 - "Now the soul-man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "The soul-man"; compare this with "he that is spiritual" in verse 15. What is in view is a likeness after which the being is constituted. You know the meaning of "ikon" (Gr. eikon). An ikon is an image, a likeness, a figure; and here in the New Testament we have three Greek words derived from eikon. The word is changed to ikos, which implies "to take the likeness of." So you get this word psukikos, which means soul-likeness, after the likeness of the soul. That is what is referred to here in 1 Cor. 2. "Now the man of soul, the soulman," the man who is constituted soul-wise, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." That is the man to which 1 Cor. 15:45 refers. "The first man Adam was made a living soul," the psukikos man. Then there is another word - sarkikos (Sarx means flesh). That is the man who is constituted wholly on the principle of the flesh. But then there is this other word so often used - pneumatikos; and he is the man whose likeness is of the spirit, the spiritual man. It is to him that such passages refer as "He that is spiritual": "The last Adam a life-giving spirit." just that by the way.

To get down to this matter of two orders, the psukikos and the pneumatikos orders, or the soul-order and the spirit-order. These are the characteristics or natures of two creations, the old creation, and the new creation in Christ Jesus. We are saying, then, that there are two creations, representing two orders of man, active, and very active. Of course, you know that in yourself personally that is true. There is an active old creation order or soul life. You know also, that, if you are a born-again child of God, there is another Man in you active, and these two do not get on well together, and that is largely the root and cause of all your trouble. But in the wider realm, this is true of the whole two worlds.

The second thing is that, over those two creations, there are two lords. There is the one of whom we have read, the prince of this world, the great ruler of this world, darkness with his hosts, his hordes of evil spirits - Satan, the Dragon, the Devil, and his angels. They are there over the old creation and governing it. On the other side, there is the Lord Jesus Who is Lord of the new creation.

Two Realms in Conflict

Thirdly, although we do not always feel it to be so inside of ourselves, there is nevertheless from God's standpoint and in God's mind an absolute divide between these two. They are split apart by nothing less than the Cross of Christ, and that Cross is immense. It puts things in two entirely separate realms. Later we shall come to see the working of that, but just for the moment I anticipate by reminding you of the object that the Apostle Paul had in view when writing to the Corinthians. At the beginning of his first letter he said "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom... for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (2:1-2). The object which he had in view in that deliberate determination was to put two worlds asunder in Corinth. They had come too near and were interfering with each other, and everything was upset because of the overlapping of those two worlds - the realm of the natural (you see how much Paul says about it) and the realm of the spiritual. We never get anywhere until this mix-up has been put right. So he said in effect, I determined to put the Cross right in there between these two things and split them asunder, put them apart. The Cross makes the great divide between these two creations, these two natures, soul and spirit.

Now another thing - and this is where we get very near to the point of our present meditation - the medium used by the prince of this world in the old creation is the soul of man; that is his line of action, his basis of operation. On the other hand, the means, the basis, the instrument of the Lord Jesus in the new creation is the spirit of man - of course, renewed in new birth, quickened and raised and joined with the Lord one spirit, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Man's spirit is the vessel of His activities. So you find that there is a continual conflict between soul and spirit in the individual; but also in the larger world, the whole world, it is like that.

Satan Always Works Through the Soul

All Satanic activities are soul-wise. That is a key which will unlock a vast realm of things, if only you get it into your hands spiritually. Satan's activities are all soul-wise. He assailed the soul of man in the beginning. You know what the soul is - mind, heart, will: reason, emotion and volition. Satan came arguing and reached man's mind; he came appealing and seduced his heart; he came driving and forced his will. So he got that creation soul-wise into his hands, and ever since then all his activities have been soul-wise. He is a spirit, an evil spirit, but he works soul-wise. This whole world is run by Satan on the psychological basis; it is all psychology. We have had perhaps the greatest exhibition ever given to this world of that fact during the recent years. More than anything else, it has been a psychological warfare. But we have seen through the psychology so much that is absolutely Satanic. You may call it a "war of nerves." What is that but a psychological war? But so it is apart from wars; this world is run on the psychological basis. Everything commercial is psychological; so are all the secrets of good business. You will never have any success in business if you do not know the psychological moment and the psychological method, and all that. All the secrets of good teaching lie there - in your psychological acumen to know the psychology of the child. This world is all on that level.

But let us come to this. Have you not recognised that the activities of the Devil are always like this - in some way to stir up the soul? When there is some interest of the Lord in view - a conference is coming, or something which has spiritual values wrapped up in it - have you not found again and again that, in advance of it, there is a drive made on your soul to provoke you, to get you bad-tempered, to do anything to get your soul stirred up? You know when that has happened you are out of position, you have to get quiet with the Lord and get the seething inside calmed down. It is extraordinary how it happens; it comes from nowhere; very often there is no explanation. You take on provocations that do not exist, interpret looks and words in a manner never intended; there are phantoms about all the time stirring up your soul.

So often it is not coming from anything at all that you can trace - it is not anybody, it is nothing said - but somehow your soul is getting worked up and you are being put out of spiritual position; the seething of your soul like a ferment overflows your spirit and destroys its poise and strength and grip. Sometimes the method used is to depress. You feel terribly depressed. You cannot explain it, but something has happened in the atmosphere and registered upon you, depressing your spirit. Yes, all the Lord's people have known that. David knew a lot about it. "Why, art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him" (Psa. 42:5). Sometimes you have to talk to your soul like that. You know the depression of the soul to take your strength away, to sap and drain your spiritual vitality. Sometimes the method is to bring the soul into darkness. What onslaughts the Devil made on Martin Luther along that line, to bring into the darkness of accusation and condemnation, where his assurance of justification and salvation was undermined and weakened! Many of the Lord's people know a lot about that, the darkness, the overclouding, when it seems that the soul is in a dark dungeon.

Sometimes the means is to inflate the soul, and, oh, what a lot of success the Devil has gained along that line. Nebuchadnezzar was the very embodiment of this whole principle of soul life. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built?" (Daniel 4:30). That is the spirit of Antichrist inflating the soul. The word of the Lord is, "If a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing" (he really is, from God's standpoint, nothing) "he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3). How many people there are deceived along that line of self-importance! You know what this world is like in this matter. But the tragedy is that the very realm of the things of God, the work of God, has become the playground for that sort of thing, people exhibiting their own self-importance, and bringing themselves into prominence - all the expression of an inflated soul life. You find absolutely nothing of that in the Lord Jesus when He was here, but the exact opposite. "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). "He poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12).

Well, there are many other ways in which the enemy works soul-wise. Sometimes he seeks to affright. How often he has tried to get us frightened, as he did in the days of Nehemiah - and in the days of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib came and started his demonstration around Jerusalem.

The Answer to Satan Through the Spirit

On the other hand, all Christ's activities are spirit-wise, and there you open up another whole realm of Scriptures; e.g., "born of the Spirit" (John 3:8) "renewed in the spirit..." (Eph. 5:23); "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. 3:16); and - touching spiritual understanding - "the eyes of your heart enlightened" (Eph. 1:18). So you bring in the Scriptures, all bearing upon this spirit-wise activity of Christ. And this quickened, renewed, energised, indwelt spirit, is up against this soul of ours, and this soul world.

When we speak of spiritual warfare, let us not think in terms of the abstract. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." What do you take that to mean? - that they were a people of a phraseology about the blood and they started hurling their phraseology at the Devil? Well, phraseology, even about the Blood, has no effect on him. "They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb." Whom did they overcome? - the Accuser of the brethren, who accused them day and night. How do you overcome an accuser? Only by having a better case than he has. You have to have a good case, and the Blood of the Lamb represents that in a mighty way. Our legal standing because of the Blood of the Lamb puts the enemy out of court if only faith will hold to it. And we must not think in geographical terms of Satan being cast down from somewhere high up and coming crashing to the earth. This is spiritual warfare. We have to get this spiritual sense and idea of things. Our soulful mentality is always drawing pictures of places,

positions, spaces, but we have to understand that this is a spiritual matter - that Satan can, in effect, be cast from the highest heights to the lowest depths without any geographical factor coming in at all. You may have a person against you who lays a charge at your door, and thinks he has a very strong case. But you happen to have a case which undercuts that and tears it to pieces, and he goes down before you in utter collapse; he comes from a tremendous soul height to a very great depth. That is not a geographical thing but a spiritual. This is spiritual warfare, not geographical. "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12), it is not in the realm of the physical and geographical at all. It is spiritual - you can call it moral if you like - and the Blood represents a legal case, and Satan can be cast down from heaven countless times in one day. You cannot do that literally: it can only be understood spiritually. A million people all over this earth may cast him down in one day at different moments of the day. As they stand by faith on the case that the Blood provides, they have a mighty and triumphant answer. That is how spirituality works out in warfare. Christ works spirit-wise. Soul cannot cast out soul, and the soul cannot cast out the Devil because the Devil has already got it in his hand. Satan has obtained ground in our souls, but in our renewed, born-again spirits he has no place. The evil spirit behind everything can only be overcome by a spirit strengthened with might by the Spirit of God, and that means by a subduing of the soul to the spirit.

The Subjecting of the Soul to the Spirit

Now we have touched a new aspect. The Lord spoke figuratively when He said that we should take up our cross and deny ourselves; and later He went further with that in a little fuller explanation when He said "Whosoever would save his soul" - that is the word there - "shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24). The whole soul life, the whole natural life of ours, has got to be brought into subjection to our renewed spirit before the enemy can be cast out. If we are actuated by natural, soulical interests, we have no power over the Devil; he has ground. It is only when our reasoning and desiring and feeling and willing have been brought into subjection to the Spirit of Christ in our spirit as something inside of us, by our own determined and deliberate choice, that the enemy can be defeated. The enemy can make havoc in a life that is lived on the soul level, as he did at Corinth - even though it be the life of a believer. The degree in which our natural life influences us is the degree in which we are powerless over the enemy, and, let me repeat, it is in that realm that things matter. The real issue of life is in the spiritual realm. Our accountability, our worth, our value, is measured by the degree in which we count there. It matters not what we are here in this natural world. We may be important people here naturally but we do not count for anything really beyond a few passing years, and then it is *Sic transit gloria mundi* - so passes the glory of the world. It is how much we count in things spiritual that is our real value.

Spiritual Ascendancy Demands Faith

Now, let me say further and again, things that are seen, things that happen, are not alone, they have spiritual factors behind them. Oh, young people, try to get hold of this. Ask the Lord to help you to get this really registered in your hearts, not as a part of your religious education or information, but really as a working principle in your lives. Your difficult situations, hold-ups, frustrations - they are not just alone by themselves. If you are a child of God, there is a spiritual factor and a spiritual intelligence behind, and you will never get through until you can get behind the thing and deal with that spiritual factor; until you know how to deal with the enemy, the things will not be loosened. The Lord's answer to these challenges may not always be in the same way, but always on one certain principle. Paul said, "I would have you know that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel" (Phil.

1:12). That is one way in which the Lord answers the enemy - He sovereignly turns the work of the Devil to His own glory and to the fulfilment of the very thing which the Devil intended to prevent. The Lord's answer is not always in the direct way of casting out the Devil, nor a direct rebuke that brings the enemy's work to nought or stops him from working. The Lord very often allows him to work but answers him in many ways, and the ultimate issue is with the Lord, not the Devil. But always the Lord works to one principle, and that is the principle of our faith. Paul met the situation; he saw and felt the things that were happening. Do you think that in his heart he capitulated to Satan and said, The Devil has things in his own hand, it is of no use our trying to do anything? Not a bit! Paul's attitude was - the Devil sees we are having some success and he is working; he is apparently doing a lot of harm, but the issue of this thing will be with the Lord and not with the Devil. So, because of an attitude taken like that on the part of His servant, the Lord was constantly, in different ways, answering the Devil and getting the issue into His own hands. But the instrument of the Lord in defeating and casting down the Devil was the spirit of the servant of God standing strongly - and you do marvel how strongly Paul's spirit stood. Though Satan often seemed to have things his way, in the end the Lord triumphed every time.

Spiritual Ascendancy Through Discipline

We have spoken of our feeling of grief over the lost impact of the Gospel, and of the Church, and of Christian life generally; but where does impact begin? It does not really begin upon men, nor upon things, nor upon the world. Impact really begins upon the spiritual forces behind, and if you have not the spiritual strength, all your assaults and all your endeavours will be in vain. Are you in the Lord's work? Unless you can get behind people and things to the spiritual factors and forces, you may as well close down. You are not, in the long run, going to have much to show for all your labours. You are dealing ultimately with spiritual things. If you are going into the work of the Lord, remember you cannot get this equipment by mere Bible study or by any kind of soul-training. You can only get this along the line of the discipline of the soul and the strengthening of spirit, and that is why there should be a predominant element of practical life in all training for the Lord's work. For instance, to know how to live triumphantly in spirit with difficult people. You will never go out to meet the power of the enemy behind this world unless you have learned how to meet him in your own spirit and under discipline. So the Lord puts us through a severe gruelling before He really commits to our hands spiritual responsibility.

Let me say at once that the soul is not to be annihilated. We are not wrong in having souls; our souls have to be won, to be mastered and brought into charge of the spirit so that the self-element is eliminated and the soul serves the spirit and serves the Lord, and not ourselves.

You see the nature of spiritual warfare; you see the realm in which things matter most. Well, this takes us back to our earlier message - the reconstituting of us and the building of us up in an inward way, the increase of spiritual measure. May the Lord use this meditation to secure for Himself the instrument that He needs for casting out the prince of this world, for establishing and extending His true spiritual kingdom and reign.

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