

Our Warfare: Turning Defeat into Victory

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Our Warfare **T. Austin-Sparks** **LIFE SENTENCE Publishing, LLC** RELIGION / Christianity / General ISBN 13: 978-0-9832016-2-5 Available from the Publishers at: (at the price of your choice) www.lifesentencepublishing.com 715.223.3013 Also available from: Amazon.com Barnesandnoble.com And more... Printed in the United States of America [Contents](#) [Preface](#) [Supreme Command](#) [The Twofold Main Objective](#) [Morale](#) [Intelligence and Diversity in Unity and Unity in Diversity](#) [Mentality, or Attitude of Mind](#) [Discipline, Provisioning and Flexibility](#)

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T. AUSTIN SPARKS

FOREST HILL,

LONDON,

1960. **Chapter 1** *Supreme Command* "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of OUR WARFARE are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strong holds)" (2 Corinthians 10:3–4). Although the Bible contains so much about the warfare of God's people, and although we as His people may have had much teaching on the subject, it would

probably be true to say that we have largely failed to apply the instruction we have received—to situations, to circumstances, to happenings; and that this accounts for many of our troubles, individually and collectively. While there is much for which the enemy is not to be blamed as the first cause, but which is due rather to our own foolishness or unguardedness—our own faults—yet there is still very much more that is attributable to his interest, to his interference, and to his action. Our need today is not so much to be informed as to the reality of spiritual conflict—we know that to be a fact!—as to be more alive to the extra factor lying behind situations, the situations with which we are trying, with so little success, to cope. We try to cope with things, as though they were everything, and so often we miss their real underlying significance. What we need, therefore, is understanding and wisdom—for wisdom means the ability to apply knowledge—wisdom as to this whole spiritual campaign, our warfare and its principles. But let me say at once: we are not embarking upon a study of Satan, or demons, or demonology! It is a very favorite trap of the enemy to get people occupied and obsessed with himself, and, by the help of God, we are not going to fall into that. Our object is to study spiritual warfare itself, as viewed mainly from the Lord's side. Let me here put in a brief word as to the origin, or occasion, of the messages here presented. Not having a great deal of time for general reading, I make it a matter of prayer that all my serious reading may be spiritually profitable and of value—whether it be reading a spiritual book or not. Just before leaving on a recent voyage to the United States, I was exercised in this manner, when a book came to my notice, and an extract from it arrested me. It was the record of the great South East Asia campaign in the second World War, and was entitled *Defeat into Victory*. It is a heavy volume of 550 closely printed pages, with an added 23 for index. But having been arrested by this extract, I took the book with me and read it on the voyage, making careful notes. And as I read, I was more and more impressed that through it the Lord was leading me to something—that He had a message in it for His people. There is enough in this volume to provide material for lengthy meditation. Much of it could be of real value, in this day particularly, to the people of God, and especially to those who have a sense of responsibility for the Lord's interests. For our present consideration we shall only pick out a few of the most vital and essential points; but, when I mention a few of the subjects covered in that volume, you will recognize its very great possibilities. Here are some examples: Supreme Command; Staff and Personnel—with all the order flowing therefrom; Loyalty Upward to the Top and Downward to the Bottom; Training; Provisioning; Diversity of Function in Unity of Object; Intelligence; Morale; Flexibility; The Great Objective—on the one side, of the Supreme Command, on the other side, of the enemy. The discerning will recognize that these ten points could provide scope for valuable consideration for a long time. If all that were translated and interpreted into spiritual terms, and the Lord's people were in possession of such strategy spiritually, what a tremendously efficient people they would be! Now, it must be remembered that this is a volume of lessons learned, and that most of these great lessons were learned through defeat. That is, that the terrible story of the first South East Asia campaign—with its devastation, retreat, loss of tens of thousands of lives, and all that goes with that—became history because the vital factors mentioned were either absent or inadequate or in disorder. Surely this provides us with a field for instruction. Should not the people of God and their leaders learn from their defeats and their setbacks at least as quickly and thoroughly? **Higher Direction** We begin with the main thing: 'Supreme Command'. And here the writer of this book uses an expression which I like very much. He calls it: 'Higher Direction'. That is fine! That gets us there! 'Supreme Command'—'Higher Direction'. In that connection there occurs the following sentence: 'The first step towards ultimate victory was the setting up of the Supreme Command, controlling all allied forces of land, sea and air.' What a statement that is when we carry it into the spiritual realm! The turning of a terrible catastrophe, tragedy, defeat into a glorious and consummate victory is here said to have had as its first step—perhaps its main step—the setting up of the Supreme Command. This will resolve itself into several quite distinct matters for our recognition. But this document proves in itself (of course in its own realm, here on the earth), beyond any question or room for doubt, that everything centers in and hangs upon Supreme Command, or Higher Direction. This was something that seemed to have been overlooked, or had at most been regarded as optional; but now, here is this

overwhelming weight of evidence and proof which says that it is absolutely essential. This Higher Direction, this Supreme Command, is not mere idealism, it is not just something official—it is vital. In this case it was clearly demonstrated that the saving of multitudes of lives, of months and years of time, of honor, liberty, and victory, all hung upon this one matter. Lives were lost, time was thrown away, honor besmirched, liberty sacrificed, victory turned to defeat, and possession turned to loss and nothing, because of the absence of this Supreme Command, this Higher Direction. And in the light of two thousand years of history, no one will think it exaggeration to say that that is largely the story of the Church: lives, souls, lost; time given away; the honor of the Lord and His Church dragged in the mud. Liberty, victory, fullness?—no, there has not been a great deal of these. And may it not be traceable to this same thing: an undervaluing of, or maladjustment to, the Higher Direction, the Supreme Command? It proved, in the war, to be essential and vital and not open to any option; and in the Church there must be One over all, above all, in all, and through all, and only One in that position. **Mutuality of Understanding** The matter of the necessity for Supreme Command is analyzed, and one thing that comes out of that analysis is this: there must be mutual knowledge and understanding between the Supreme Command and the Forces. Here is a quotation: 'A Supreme Commander, if he is wise, will see that his troops know him'. Much is said about that. The Supreme Commander is not just a name, a figurehead; some remote person somewhere, with his hands upon everything, someone talked about. He is personally known. This book shows how the Supreme Commander made it his business to get down among and be known to his troops, to have a personal touch; he knew his people and they knew him. This is a simple but profoundly wise statement. What does it carry with it? It carries with it the basic principle that the Lord's first need is to bring us to know Him. Before we can do anything, we must know the Lord. There is no victory without that. Our knowledge of the Lord will determine the measure of our progress in this warfare. The fact is that it is so often for want of that knowledge that we are held up or defeated. To put that the other way round: it is so often just when we come into a new knowledge of the Lord that we go on in a new way of victory. The Lord takes infinite pains to get His people to know Him. This takes us back into the New Testament. In his letter to the Ephesians—that great battle letter (for such it is)—Paul puts tremendous weight upon the word 'know'. Right at the beginning, he prays: "that ye may know what is the hope of His calling"; "that ye may know... the riches... of His inheritance in the saints"; "that ye may know... the exceeding greatness of His power" (1:18–19). "That ye may know..."! That word 'know' is a governing word in this whole matter of our warfare. Tried warrior that he was, Paul laid the greatest stress on knowing the Lord. "That I may know Him...", he wrote elsewhere (Phil. 3:10). He said that that was far more important than all the other things that are regarded as important by men. He contrasts that knowledge with all that he had had previously—a great world wealth of inheritance. 'But', said he, 'I count all that as nothing—as refuse—that I may know Him'. That made Paul the warrior he was, and from him has come so much for the Church militant. 'The Commander, if he is wise, will see that his own troops know him.' If that could be said of a mortal man here on this earth, our Supreme Commander is no less wise. It is the utmost wisdom—we say it reverently—on the part of the Lord to ensure that our knowledge of Him is ever on the increase. **The Marks of a Supreme Commander** In the next place, let us look at the characteristics required of a Supreme Commander, and their effect upon his forces.

(a) *He has a Clearly Defined Objective* Firstly, the Supreme Commander should have a clearly defined objective. We ought to know, from the New Testament, that our Supreme Commander has that; but it is of infinite importance that we know also, with Him, what that clearly defined objective is. That this is not so, accounts for so much of our weakness, resulting in such loss and delay. How many of God's people could express in a few words, from the New Testament, exactly what is the supreme objective of the Lord? Let us challenge ourselves: could we do that? On half a sheet of notepaper, could we put down what the Lord's supreme objective is? If not, we are at a loss, in limitation, in this battle. Think what it would mean if a sufficient number of the Lord's people were solidly bound together by a clear and unquestioning apprehension of the Lord's ultimate objective! He has made this known to His forces; we have it in His Word: "To make all men see..." (Eph. 3:9). Do you remember what it is they are to see?

(b) He has a Clear Plan for Reaching His Objective Secondly, the Supreme Commander should have a comprehensive and detailed vision of how he will reach that objective. Our Supreme Commander, without any doubt, has a detailed vision of how He will reach His objective, and therefore we need to be instructed in that in like manner. In other words, we should know, with the Lord, where we are going and what we are after. Are we 'beating about the bush', as we say; are we going round in circles; are we just experimenting? What proportion of all our efforts and expenditure is achieving anything really effective? It is the need of the people of God to be moving together in the integration of a single vision—the vision of the objective and of how God intends to reach it. This is not knowledge beyond our possessing. We have the documents in our hands, if only we would study them and pray for spiritual illumination on this matter. As God's people, we need to be deeply exercised as to how the battle is going. We must first of all know what is God's supreme objective—not just what is incidental or subsidiary; and then, if God has given any light in His Word as to the principles, the ways, the means, by which He intends to reach that end, we must make it our business to know these things also.

(c) He has Command of Adequate Resources Thirdly, a Supreme Commander must have command of adequate resources to carry the campaign through. That is searching. We need, of course, have no question on that score so far as our Supreme Commander is concerned. We can and must be perfectly at rest on that matter, deeply and quietly and finally assured that He has all the resources at His command for seeing this through. The book to which I have been referring has a long and terrible story to tell of disaster resulting from inadequacy and insufficiency of available resources. There is, as we have said, no question about the adequacy of our Lord's resources, but we surely need to come into the good of that. Again we refer to this great battle document, the Letter to the Ephesians: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (1:3). Paul had a wonderful apprehension of the resources available for himself and the Church in Christ. It was that apprehension that called forth some of his most joyful superlatives: "*O the depth of the riches*" (Rom. 11:33); "*the unsearchable riches*" (Eph. 3:8); and others.

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We may have had much teaching on various aspects of Divine truth and revelation, such as the Church, the Body of Christ, and other matters, and it may be that the teaching has not been without value—it may even have been quite profitable. But I wonder whether we have made enough of this matter of our being, as the Lord’s people, really on a war footing. Has it really come home to us that we, the people of God, are supposed to be in the field under war conditions? Is there the mentality and consciousness in every section and in every individual that we are in a great campaign; that there is no letup in this matter, and that we are in it up to the hilt? There may be, and indeed often is, a real gap between our teaching, instruction, and information on the subject of Christian soldiering, and the assured conviction of being actually in a war—on active service.

About the Author

Theodore Austin-Sparks was born in London, England in 1888 and was educated in both England and Scotland. At the age of 25 he was ordained as a pastor; however, a

few years later his "career" took a decidedly different direction when a spiritual crisis brought him to a place of brokenness. He left the denomination with which he was involved, dropped the title of "Reverend"; and went on to produce much writing, all with a strong revelation of Christ.

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