

Ever since the fall into sin there has been a cosmic battle waged between good and evil, between the forces of heaven and the forces of hell, between righteousness and sin. This battle still goes on even to this day. And yet, the war has already been won. Satan and his angels have already been tossed out of heaven like lightning. He has lost his ability to accuse Christians before the throne of God. The stronger Man, Jesus Christ, has bound him and taken away the armor in which that wicked serpent trusted. The war has already been won. So how can the battle continue?

God lets the battle continue on earth so that we would look to our inheritance in heaven. He makes us encounter the devil's attacks and temptations on earth so that we would learn that he has been cast out of heaven. God wants you see for yourself how Christ has conquered. Look and see how your Lord has already overcome the powers of sin, death, and the devil. Walk by faith in the Son of God. Don't rely on what your eyes can see in this dying world, but on the Word of Christ whose blood speaks peace and good will from your Father in heaven.

God lets the devil roam the earth so that you would learn to face him without fear. Face and recognize the forces of evil, not only from the devil, but from the world and your own sinful nature. Face it here on earth. But don't let the fierceness of the battle overwhelm you. The devil's anger is great and terrifying. But that's only because he knows that his days are numbered. God allows us to experience the lies and attacks of the devil and his angels so that we would rely on nothing but the blood of Christ, hold onto his Word, and finally overcome and keep the victory.

This battle, which we experience here on earth, is a fight over words – the words of the devil against the words of God. The old serpent fired the first shot when he ask, "Did God really say?" He doesn't come up with his own words. All he can do is question and twist God's Word. Satan accused Job of fearing God only because of his material wealth (Job 1-2). Pharaoh's magicians claimed to possess the same power as God by imitating the signs he performed (Exod 7). Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel (Num 22). The Assyrian king sent his minister of propaganda in the days of King Hezekiah to intimidate the people of Judah, saying, "Do you think mere words dropped from the lips can take the place of strategy and military might? . . . Don't let Hezekiah get you to trust in the LORD . . ." (Is 36:5, 15). This battle over words continued to rage as false prophets led the people astray by filling them with vain hopes and empty talking points. And even to this day, as the Scriptures warn us, people cannot endure sound teaching but, with itching ears, they compile for themselves teachers who tell them what they want to hear (2 Tim 4:3).

This spiritual battle wages on to this day. People react very forcefully against the Word of God. They believe the lies of the devil, who leads them to attack all three articles of the Creed. They attack God's works of creation, redemption, and sanctification.

They attack God's work of creation. They say that a man can become a woman, a man can marry a man and even have children with a man, that a child in the womb can be terminated at the whim of his mother, that we are products of billions of years of evolution from lower lifeforms, and a host of other deceitful and perverted lies.

They attack God's work of redemption. They claim that Jesus is one of many ways to salvation and peace. They deny that they are sinners in need of salvation. They twist the saving work of Christ and redefine it. Instead of Christ being the Savior of sinners who shed his blood to reconcile us to God, they portray Christ's work as a social redemption. To them, Christ's work of redemption is simply an

underdog story, only meant to inspire the underdogs of this world to overcome the oppression of those in higher stations. They don't look to Christ as their Redeemer from sin and condemnation. Instead, Christ becomes merely a figurehead of their own agendas. Meanwhile, they are their own redeemers. They justify themselves. They write their own story, decide their own identities, and strive for their own power. Anyone who speaks a word against them is counted as an enemy. They rely on their own righteousness, refusing to humble themselves and turn to the blood and righteousness of Jesus.

They also attack God's work of sanctification. They desecrate what is holy, not only with their mouths but with their lives. They see their bodies as their own property to do with as they please. They satisfy whatever carnal desires come out of their dying flesh. And they claim it is liberating. They follow their hearts, imagining that this is the key to true freedom. But they are only deceiving themselves. They have forgotten that their bodies were not only created by God, but they were also bought with the price of his own blood. Your body is not your own. God desires to dwell in you by his Holy Spirit. He desires to raise your body up on the last day. But those who believe the devil's lie insist that their bodies are free when they indulge in sexual immorality, drunkenness, mutilation, and other kinds of wickedness.

These teachings are not just cultural talking points. They are the weapons of warfare, which the devil, the prince of this world, has given to the children of this world. These are therefore not merely social or political battles. They are battles over words.

And yet, such battles over words are often hidden behind social and political talk. So if a Christian speaks up for the truth against these various errors, then the world will peg him simply as a political activist. But don't be fooled! Just because something is deemed political or is debated in the political arena doesn't make it out of bounds for Christians to address with God's Word. When Paul was in Athens, he went to the Areopagus, also called Mars Hill, to talk to the people. This was a place where the people of Athens would talk politics, among other things. Paul met them where they were, steering their conversation to talk about religion. He then spoke of God who has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ. And these words of Paul had real consequences, which were felt in the marketplace and in the political realm. There were riots in the streets, and Paul was seen as a troublemaker in society. Not because he organized rallies or sought to overthrow a regime. No, but simply because he spoke the truth of God's Word. Despite the fact that the truth gets hijacked by political and economic hype, it still remains the truth of God. Christ stood before Pontius Pilate, a politician who saw our Lord's trial as threat to his political career. But Jesus bore witness to the truth. Paul stood before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, all Roman politicians and rulers. While his opponents tried to portray his ministry as some kind of political activism, the apostle focused on the true battle as a fight for the gospel of Christ.

Do not be fooled by those who accuse you of worldly activism when you are standing on the truth of Christ! It's one of the oldest tricks the devil has. For example, if you speak against abortion in the public square, the devil says that you are bringing your religion into politics, as if that is against the rules. But then when you speak against abortion in the church, the devil says that you are bringing politics into the church. You can't win, because the devil doesn't fight with the same rules of engagement. All he does is lie and deceive.

Now, as much as we should not be fooled by these attempts of the devil to silence us, we should also take warning against becoming what the devil accuses us of being. There are those who equate the salvation of Christ with their own political agendas. This comes from those who call themselves liberals as well as those who call themselves conservatives. Our earthly achievements do not cause God's

kingdom to come. Instead, it is only faith in the words and promises of Christ that can overcome the evils of this world. God calls you to speak the truth in whatever station he has placed you. Speak the truth about God's creation. And don't believe lies. Because every lie originates from the devil, who is the father of lies. But as you stand on what is true about God's creation, remember that all truth centers in on Christ who is the very Truth of God in the flesh.

God sends his angels to fight against the forces of darkness on your behalf. He sends them to protect you from every evil of body, soul, property, and reputation. They guard you as you walk in the duties God has given you, whether in the home, in the marketplace, or in the public square. They guard your money and goods, your sanity, your health, and all things you need in this life. But they are doing so not so that you can have your treasure on earth. If God gives us civil peace and quiet, if he lets us build good institutions and promote wholesome culture in this life, it is so that we would look to our eternal inheritance in heaven. This is the main mission of the angels. This is their goal as they continue to fight for you at the command of their Master, Jesus Christ. It is that you would overcome all evil with good. It is that you would conquer this world, not by the powers of this world, but by the blood of the Lamb and a true confession of the gospel.

I recently watched a video of Kim Jong Un, the ruthless dictator of North Korea, whose hands are dripping with the blood of many Christians. In the video, he was hanging out with little children, smiling at them, and showing them affection. This propaganda film portrays him as a loving and caring ruler of his people. Of course, he's doing what any good politician does. But when Jesus tells us not to offend the little children, he isn't giving us a strategy on how to win popular support. Even a godless dictator knows how to kiss babies in front of the camera. No, Jesus is teaching us that our power is not in earthly things. We must not merely cozy up to the little children. We must become like them. We must rely not on ourselves but on the power of Christ who died in weakness. Those who have this faith of a little child have the very peace and favor of God. They have the protection of the holy angels who see the face of the Father. They have an inheritance and a victory that cannot be taken away.

When we recognize that we are no match to the forces of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, it is then when we begin to see our victory in Christ. Look to him who sits on the throne of heaven. Look to him whose blood still intercedes for you. Look to him who is your righteousness and salvation before the Father. Approach the throne of grace and find help in time of need. Because the devil cannot accuse you or attack you there. That lying snake has been cast out of heaven. Let him rant and rave on earth. This is why Jesus calls him the prince of this world. So let him rule on earth while his time is running out. Meanwhile, he has no share in Jesus. Look, therefore, to Jesus. Look to the Son of God in his Word, in his gospel, in his body and blood. There the devil cannot come near. There all lies have been silenced. There the truth of Christ reigns. Your sins are forgiven. Your inheritance is secured. And your battle is won.

Though the battle over words continues in this world, Christ already holds the battlefield. The Word of God has conquered the lies of the devil. The righteousness of Christ covers your sins. The angels of heaven rejoice. And as surely as you have been baptized into Christ, washed by the blood of the Lamb, God makes your life and your death a testimony to his victory. Amen.