

Revelation 12:7-12

The first war that ever took place was not in Europe, or in the Middle East, or in Africa. It was not any place on earth. The first war took place in heaven. The archangel Michael, with his angels of God, fought against the devil and his evil angels. It was not a war fought with howitzers and tanks, warships and guns. It was a war of words. Words?...we ask in disbelief. How can a war be fought and won with words? We have all said the phrase, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." Perhaps we have even believed it. But God knows better, and so does Satan.

He is called the dragon in our text, but he does not fight with his claws, or with his tail covered in barbs, or by breathing fire from his nostrils. Satan fights and attacks with his mouth...more specifically, with the words that come out of his mouth. He is called two things in our text: the deceiver and the accuser. He deceives; he lies with his mouth. And he accuses with his mouth. In heaven he deceived many of the angels and they followed him. But Michael and his angels fought back. With God's words in his mouth, Michael fought against Satan, "*and there was no longer any place for (the devil) in heaven.*" He was "*thrown down to the earth.*"

And so he who began the first war--in heaven, is now roaming the earth. Is it any wonder that the earth is full of hatred and violence? That wars have always been, and will continue here until the end of time? But understand this...Satan does not just incite people to war against each other; Satan is at war against us. "*Woe to you, O earth and sea,*" says our text, "*for the devil has come down to you in great wrath because he knows his time is short.*" Satan is an angel, and he attacks, divides, and conquers using words.

Satan is an angel, a very powerful archangel. The word angel means messenger. God created the angels to be His messengers, to do His bidding and to carry His words in their mouths. And so the angel Gabriel came to both Zacharias and to Mary with the words of God in his mouth. Throughout the Bible we see God's angels carrying His words to His people. They are messengers...God's messengers.

But Satan does not speak the words of God. He does not speak with God's authority. Satan speaks out of the evil in his heart. He lies, he deceives, he accuses. Even when he spoke to Eve in the Garden, he did not speak the words of God. Rather, he twisted and turned what God had said. When he spoke to Jesus in the desert, though he quoted Scripture, Satan lied and deceived using God's words, for he applied the words in a false manner.

The words of Satan are all around us. Turn on your television, turn on your computer, listen to the song lyrics of popular songs, open a magazine, a newspaper, a book, listen to your coworkers, your friends. Not all that we see and hear is from the mouth of the devil. But the truth is that of all the words coming at us in all of these various ways day after day, many of the words that come to us come from the mouth of Satan. He attacks, divides, and conquers using words.

And so we see families in turmoil. Spouses speaking in anger against each other. Children being raised not in the way of the Lord, but with the influence of Hollywood, pop music, and friends who couldn't care less about Jesus. We see churches in turmoil. Sacrificing the truth for the sake of growth in numbers. Denying the power of Baptism. Preaching a watered-down Law along with a false Gospel--turning hearers to their own efforts and not to the certain promises of God in Christ Jesus. We see our government, our nation, and our world in turmoil. People believing the devil's lies that all roads lead to heaven, that the Bible is a human book filled with errors, that no religion, especially

Christianity, can claim to have the truth, that sin is just a blemish which we can fix on our own, that marriage is not just a man and a woman, that abortion is not murder, that sex outside of marriage is okay. I could go on and on. Words. Satan's words are all around us. They brought sin into this world, and his words continue to assault and destroy the very people whom God made from dust and the words of His loving mouth.

Satan's words are in our heads right now. He tempts us to doubt what God has said. He tempts you to look upon your pastor as just a man, and not as Jesus' messenger to you. He tempts us to doubt the power and miracle of our baptism. He tempts us to see little need for the Lord's Supper. And you can be sure that through this week he will tempt you to see little reason to come back here to God's House next Sunday.

But just as Satan fights with words, so does God. The archangel Michael did not fight Satan using his fists to beat him. He spoke the words of God, and those words drove Satan out of heaven. Never was there a battle won against Satan in which God's words were not the weapon used to defeat him. When God's people were poised for defeat on the shores of the Red Sea, Moses spoke the words of God and the waters parted for the people to cross. When God's people were surrounded by their enemies time and again, on the verge of defeat, God's words were spoken by His judges and His prophets, and His people were delivered. Everywhere Jesus went He spoke the words of God, and sicknesses were healed, lepers were cleansed, demons were cast out, the dead were raised, and the poor in spirit were given the kingdom of God.

If Satan is to be conquered in your life, it will be the Word of God that does it. You were immersed in that Word in your baptism. You feed upon that Word here at God's altar. That Word is placed into your ears every time you come here to the House of the Lord. That Word is available for you to read in your home. The devil knows that he is no match for the Word of God. And that is why his prime objective is to keep you away from God's words. Satan works relentlessly to prevent these pews from being filled, to keep our children out of Sunday School and our teens and adults out of Bible Class, to keep our members away from the Lord's Supper, and to occupy the minds of our members with other things when they are here in church.

We are so weak, you and I. We give in so easily to the devil. We fail daily to use the weapon of God's Word against Satan. And that is why the Word became flesh and lived among us, and went to the cross where He died for us. Jesus is the Word of God who defeats Satan. He was the Word on the archangel Michael's mouth to drive the devil out of heaven. He was the Word on the mouths of the prophets and the apostles. And Jesus is the Word who is here with you and for you today. His blood was shed for you, and in your baptism, His blood covers you. And that Word speaks to God day after day, "This one is Mine, Father, forgive him, forgive her."

If God's Word could drive Satan out of heaven, then it can also drive him day after day out of your heart and mind. You are no powerful archangel, but you have the same Word that Michael used to defeat Satan. When you come to the Lord's Supper in a few minutes, the devil will tell you that you are not worthy, that you are so terrible a sinner that God's forgiveness is not for you. But you have God's words to hold on to..."*Given and shed **for you** for the remission of your sins.*" Jesus is for you, dear sinner. His body and blood is in the bread and wine for you. His death on the cross is for you. His forgiveness is for you--you are forgiven.

Satan's words will not break your bones, but they can hurt and destroy you. But God's words are your shield and defense. God's words are the antidote to Satan's poison. God's words will keep you safe from the evil one now and forever.

The world around us is going to hell, my friends, for they are devouring Satan's words like there is no tomorrow. You are protected. You are safe with Jesus. He who died for you, fights for you. With His words in your ears, on your lips, and in your heart, the wicked foe has no power over you. Amen.