

50 POSITIONAL TRUTHS

#50: “Drafted in the Angelic Conflict”

At the point of salvation, every Christian is in effect drafted into the angelic conflict. Every Christian is involved in the “warfare” between God and Satan. All believers are enjoined to put on the armor of God to protect them from the schemes of the evil. Whether we realize it or not, all of our struggles are related to Satan and his demonic hordes:

Ephesians 6:10-12, Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

We may think that our battles are *principally* “against flesh and blood,” but this is simply untrue. Our battles really are not with people or circumstances. Our real enemy is Satan and his hordes as they marshal all of their forces to get us out of fellowship and brainwash us. Satan’s kosmos diabolicus attacks us constantly—not with knives and guns, but with arguments! There are thousands of arguments arrayed against the Christian, e.g. secular humanism, post-modernism, legalism, anti-intellectualism, evolution, materialism, socialism, behaviorism, isolationism, environmentalism (that environment determines a person’s character), pragmatism, anti-supernaturalism (against miracles in the Bible), anti-inspirationalism of the Bible, anti-metaphysicalism, reductionism, epiphenomenalism, radical empiricism, rationalism, scientism, mysticism, emotionalism, perspectivalism, hopelessness, despair, fear, anxiety, nihilism, et al, ad nauseam.

The goal of Satan and his vast kosmos is to defeat the Christian *mentally* and *spiritually*. This is why we urgently need Bible doctrine and good thinking (philosophy, “love of wisdom”). We need sound philosophy for sound thinking, and we need Bible doctrine to understand how to live the spiritual life through the empowering and indwelling Holy Spirit. We need the Logos and the Holy Spirit. We need to understand how to live before God in our royal priesthood and before man in our ambassadorship. This is the task of the local church: to provide the spiritual food so each believer will continue to grow spiritually and to be able to destroy all of Satan’s arguments against Christianity:

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, ⁴ for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ *We are* destroying arguments and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

Note the language: “destroying arguments” against Christianity. We are not to coddle the arguments or face them with “well, it is just a mystery.” We are to take no mercy on all of the arguments against Christianity. We are to destroy them! The believer is commanded to do apologetics:

1 Peter 3:15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

The theme of apologetics runs through the New Testament in one way or another—especially in the context of supergrace believers. The word for apologetics appears 17 times in noun or verb form in the New Testament, and both the noun (*apologia*) and verb form (*apologeomai*) can be translated “defense” or “vindication” in every case. Usually the word is used to refer to a speech made in one’s own defense. For example, in one passage Luke says that a Jew named Alexander tried to “make a defense” before an angry crowd in Ephesus that was incited by idol-makers whose business was threatened by Paul’s preaching (Acts 19:33). Elsewhere Luke always uses the word in reference to situations in which Christians, and in particular the apostle Paul, are put on trial for proclaiming their faith in Christ and have to defend their message against the charge of being unlawful (Luke 12:11; 21:14; Acts 22:1; 24:10; 25:8, 16; 26:2, 24). Paul himself used the word in a variety of contexts in his epistles. To the Corinthians, he found it necessary to “defend” himself against criticisms of his claim to be an apostle (1 Cor. 9:3; 2 Cor. 12:19). At one point he describes the repentance exhibited by the Corinthians as a “vindication” (2 Cor. 7:11 NASB), that is, as an “eagerness to clear yourselves.” To the Romans, Paul described Gentiles who did not have the written Law as being aware enough of God’s Law that, depending on their behavior, their own thoughts will either prosecute or “defend” them on Judgment Day (Rom. 2:15). Toward the end of his life, Paul told Timothy, “At my first *defense* no one supported me” (2 Tim. 4:16), referring to the first time he stood trial. Paul’s usage here is similar to what we find in Luke’s writings. Earlier, he had expressed appreciation to the Philippians for supporting him “both in my imprisonment and in the *defense* and confirmation of the gospel” (Phil. 1:7). Here again the context is Paul’s conflict with the government and his imprisonment. However, the focus of the “defense” is not Paul but “the gospel”: Paul’s ministry includes defending the gospel against its detractors, especially those who claim that it is subversive or in any way unlawful. So Paul says later in the same chapter, “I am appointed for the *defense* of the gospel” (Phil. 1:16). Finally, in 1 Peter 3:15 believers are told always to be prepared “to make a *defense* to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” The context here is similar to Paul’s later epistles and to Luke’s writings: non-Christians are slandering the behavior of Christians and threatening them with persecution (1 Pet. 3:13-17; 4:12-19). When challenged or even threatened, Christians are to behave lawfully, maintain a good conscience, and give a reasoned defense of what they believe to anyone who asks. *Every believer is commanded to be able to defend His Christian faith, Bible doctrine! The pastor-teacher cannot equip believers by simply giving inspirational applications from God’s Word.*

However, apologetics is only one aspect of the Christian life—his ambassadorship. The believer also needs to continue growing in his priestly life with the Lord. This requires learning spiritual truth related to spirituality. The believer must maintain a robust spiritual life to advance in the spiritual life. He must go beyond just a few passages that help him through a rough time in life. Every believer needs to build his own systematic theology. This is what I am getting at with my chart in the beginning of Bible class on the three stages of growth with all of the doctrines laid out logically. Every believer must go beyond knowing a few passages here and there and move to a doctrinal or systematic understanding of the Word of God. Then, he must advance into metaphysical understanding of God’s Word as such to really get it.

As pastor-teacher of FBC, my goal is to move *every* believer in both the areas of priesthood with an eye on developing spiritual growth and on ambassadorship with an eye on defending the faith. I will admit that I have not always been as balanced as I would like in this attempt. For example, some of my logic classes have been as long as 45 minutes. In an attempt to balance this out, I have a new system of dividing the class into 20 minutes and 50 minutes with the former dealing with prolegomena concepts and the latter directly related to biblical passages, doctrines, and the biblical text itself. I tried this last Wednesday and it seemed to work well. Having the first 20 minutes dedicated to some of the more difficult philosophical concepts will give us more time to absorb these concepts and will keep me from spending too much time on them in each class. As I have noted of late, the upcoming studies on the nature of Esse, His plan, and Evil in the world will be the most important studies I have ever done in relation to understanding God and His plan. I maintain that hardly anyone understands the book of Job, Esse, and the problem of evil. To grasp these things *necessitates* understanding metaphysics. Again, my goal is for the first 20 minutes to be devoted to developing thinking skills, and the rest (50 minutes) to the Bible and Bible doctrine on all three levels of spiritual growth: baby, adolescent, adult. In addition to this, I try to provide daily doctrines to keep us moving forward in the spiritual life.

Again, in the angelic conflict, we need to have a very healthy spiritual life and to be able to identify and destroy all of Satan’s arguments that undermine the Christian faith at large, in us, and in our children. We are all locked in an angelic conflict. Let us be winners, or as the Bible puts it “overcomers.” It sure beats the alternative.

In Christ,

Pastor Don