



# The Real Battle

Ephesians 6:12

**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

## What Do You Make of These Times?

Never in our history, at least since Adam first sinned, has there been such a dominating presence grabbing everyone's attention world-wide. We cannot help but notice it wherever we go. It is all over social media posts, news feeds and family conversations. We can't get away from it because all we know, and love are impacted by it. Half the world is in quarantine and the other half may soon be. Sermons are all using it as a theme of discussions and from the youngest to the oldest, we are limited by it. People are complaining about the boredom, the close quarters, the restrictions and behaviors of others. I recently saw a picture of a man on top of his house vacuuming his roof because he had cleaned everything else. Social gatherings are a thing of the past and relatives and friends we used to try to avoid we would happily embrace today if we could. Warnings abound and seem to be growing by the day.

The Bible warns us that there is a much greater risk to our well-being than any virus, including covid-19, that has come against us. We might not take it seriously, but if we believe the Bible at all, this matter should be at least considered. We are told that our struggle in life is not against physical entities but rather spiritual forces fighting against us. Not everyone believes it, not all accept it, but our feelings about evil spiritual forces do not determine whether they exist or not. I told my sister-in-law that she is the only person I know, who knows someone who has contracted covid-19. My lack of personal acquaintance with the virus does not make me less concerned about it. There is much in life that we do not have personal experience facing that we accept to be true. I have never seen an atom, never stepped on the moon and have yet to meet Abraham Lincoln but believe in all three. The Bible insists that there are dark forces of evil roaming our world that are real but not physical. Why shouldn't we be concerned? Because we have not touched one of these beings? That doesn't mean they don't exist. God says they do! **For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.** (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)

First, let's see what they are, these non-physical beings that fight against us. Rulers. The Greek term it translates is arche and means first, or high estate, authority. It speaks of the beginning of things, that which is around at the start. At the time of Adam and Eve and even before, these beings were giving orders and running matters in the dark world and beyond. Authorities. This is the English rendering of eksousia. It means powers, authorities, those who have dominion. Powers of this dark world. This is a bit more complicated to explain. What is translated powers of this dark world is actually the rendering of two Greek words. The first is Cosmokratoras which is loosely "worldly princes" or "strong ones in the world". In other

words, they are mostly connected to this world and have strength to make an impact. They are unseen shakers and movers among us. The second term associated with them is skotos which is darkness...a moral darkness that you can't see through, that is disorienting. We could think of them as beings of darkness who blind the world to the right things, the good things, the moral things in life. The fourth expression that marks non-physical beings, spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms is pneumatika teys ponerias which literally means spirit beings of evil or wickedness. They are not from here, but rather from unearthly places. Heavenly realms or epouranios, doesn't mean they are from heaven. They are not heavenly beings. Rather, they are from beyond us, somewhere between heaven and this world. Because they are not physical, we don't even think of them as being oriented to a place. They just aren't of this world...not springing out of this world.

We find here that there are at least four types of beings that are powerful and evil and not physical. There is plenty of speculation about these beings. What do they do? How do they impact us? What should we do about them? Both Jesus and His disciples cast evil spirits out of people. Christ certainly considered them real and enemies. He even spoke to them and they answered. Famously, Jesus cast a whole legion of demons out of one crazed man and afterward the fellow was sane and in his right mind. A little girl had a demon in her and Jesus cast it out and the mom found the child peacefully lying on her bed afterward. Early, as the Church was growing, the work of the Apostles moved into supernatural realms. **The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.** (Acts 5:12 NIV) Important for our discussion is that they also drove out evil spirits from the afflicted. **Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.** (Acts 5:16 NIV)

The Bible insists that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. Struggle translates the Greek word paleh which means wrestling or contested effort. In a paleh, there is a winner, a loser. Like Jacob wrestling with God, we do not wrestle against physical entities. If we think it is the people in our world or the viruses or calamitous disasters that are our biggest enemies, we are wrong. Forces much bigger and of greater evil than anything this world generates are up against us and they are not playing. Can we dismiss any form of horror in this world as not connected to these spirit creatures and be rational, understanding? Accounts in the Bible connect the dots between terrible evils and spiritual beings. Just go back to King Saul and his fits of rage and Scripture insists that spiritual beings that are not physical instigate terrible forms of evil.

The reason God tells us to use His armor is because we are up against forces that are much more powerful and destructive than we can imagine. Is this a message of fear? It could be if we did not have the armor of God. We will talk about the specifics of that armor in later weeks and the importance of each part, but let's take a moment to consider just what we have in the Savior who stands guard over us. Pay close attention to what Jesus has done for us. It is a lengthy passage but let it sink into you. **And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.** (Colossians 1:10-14 NIV)

Notice the last sentence. Christ has rescued us from the dominion of darkness. What is the dominion of darkness? It is the kingdom of all those spirits and forces of evil that rule the region between heaven and earth. It is the collection of forces and rulers and powers that do their best from outside the physical realm to wreck us and ruin our lives in the physical universe. We would be at the mercy of powers and authorities and evil spiritual forces if Jesus did not rise from the dead and conquer the worst of the powers the devil and all his servants have over us, the power of death. Our champion, the King of Kings ripped from them the greatest weapon the forces of Satan have when He was crucified and after dying came to life again. It was

like making Covid-19 a weak form of the flu, like taking the explosives out of a bomb, like making a gun unable to fire. Because Jesus rose from the dead and is the resurrection and the life, what can Satan or Satan's spiritual forces do to make Jesus quake in fear or surrender in despair? He is our champion and when we go with Him, when He is fully part of us, we stand as victors in the great fight against death and the rulers of darkness. There is a terrible battle we face, and we mustn't take it lightly; we though, have a champion on our side who will not lose.