

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known  
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

## ***Ephesians—Real Reality, Pt. 3***

### ***Selected Passages***

**Keywords:** Spiritual Warfare, Angels, Demons, Divine Warrior, Satan, Heaven

**PowerPoint Presentation included:** NONE

**SermonAudio Blurb:** In this third part of an introduction to Ephesians we learn that there is much more going on than what we can observe. Through an examination of many biblical passages we find warfare, resistance, rebellion and victory.

#### **I. Introduction.**

- A. Not actually a letter; it is a sermon.
- B. The book has an apocalyptic aspect to it.
  - 1. There is a whole realm of reality that we often are ignorant of or we are confused about.
  - 2. What Paul does in this book is unveil, just a bit, the mystery of the unseen.
- C. The last time I was here we began to see how the bible shows us this "unseen" world.
  - 1. We saw how the bible commonly shows God as the Divine Warrior who fights His enemies and vanquishes them.
    - a. This was seen in Exodus 15 in the celebration of the destruction of Egypt. It shows up consistently in the Psalms.
    - b. When the people of God sing those songs they were taunting and boasting.
  - 2. Paul speaks of these beings as "the rulers, powers, world forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." And the question is what and who are they?
- D. They are suprahuman beings.
  - 1. These were beings, created by God, who were and are in rebellion against God. Their job was to oversee humanity and to ensure the righteousness and justice prevailed. But they rebelled and instead drive and push the nations to evil, injustice and chaos.

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2. We don't have a clear picture of everything about them in the bible but we do have many places that make mention of them that helps us get a sense of them.
  3. Just bring your mind back to Daniel 9-10 where Daniel is visited by Gabriel and the angel mentions the Prince of Persia and then the Prince of Greece as well and Michael, the Archangel.
  4. I can point you to Jude in the New Testament where we read of Michael and Satan fighting over Moses' body as another example.
  5. Or think back to the description of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6.
- E. Now let's move into the New Testament and continue to see this unseen world and then try to pull it all together.

## **II. The Real Reality in the New Testament.**

- A.
- B. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8.
1. Paul shows us here that the "rulers of this age" are not interested in bringing about God's "shalom" or peace but rather they oppress mankind.
  2. They instead stand behind or over mankind and manipulate ideas and plans so as to kill Jesus Christ.
  3. But, because God's wisdom is far greater, they did it in ignorance and actually achieved God's plan.
  4. As a result they are described in vs 6 as those who are "passing away." They are defeated, yet not yet gone.
- C. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26.
1. In this classic passage on the resurrection we see that the work of God is not yet done.
  2. What Jesus Christ started when he died and rose again shall be fully accomplished when he raises all from the dead.
  3. We live in that inbetween time. If we are wise we keep this promise before us. If we begin to believe this age then we lose hope and conform ourselves to this age and its desires.
- D. Colossians 2.13-15.

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1. The certificate of debt is the reality of our failure to stand up to God's law. We are guilty, all of us.
  2. Notice then how he connects the "disarming" of the rulers and authorities by Jesus' death and resurrection.
  3. This was God's plan and purpose in the death of Jesus. He would defeat the sin that grips us and the powers that enslave us.
- E. Paul show this all the more in 2 Corinthians 4:4.
1. Satan seeks to dominate humanity. Which is why John says that the whole world lies in the lap of him in 1 John 5:19.
  2. How does he do this? Primarily through deception and accusation. The first to unbelievers and the second to both unbelievers and believers.
- F. It is interesting that though the cultures in the day of Paul saw that there were many gods, Paul shows that at best they are these spiritual powers under the sovereign rule of God.
1. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.
  2. Galatians 4:8-11.
- G. Colossians 2:8.
1. This shows us that there are not "neutral" patterns in our social lives.
  2. Rather these are being manipulated by these powers to bring mankind into enslavement and conformity to this age.
  3. So this enslavement seems to come through various mundane social patterns and arrangements that we are so comfortable with that we don't give it a thought.
  4. Then, add to that we see in Colossians that there are belief systems that are worked by these powers to destroy humanity.
- H. Ephesians 6:11-12
1. Note that this comes at the end of a teaching related to marriage, parenting, and employment.
  2. I won't go into great detail here but it is worth noting that in vs 12 the term "world forces" or "cosmic powers" or perhaps "powers" literally means "world-graspers".

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3. There is a sense of how these powers are seeking to grasp and take over that which is not their's to have. Very much like Genesis 6.
- I. How do we understand this today?
1. In our American, modern way of thinking and interpreting this sort of material can sound strange or silly. Yet in many parts of this world, it is not surprising at all.
  2. I want to give you several points for you to consider:
    - a. First, we need to be wise and aware so that we do not wander into silly or dangerous speculations.
      - (1) This stuff can fascinate us to the point of self-destruction. Don't allow yourself to get pulled into the "spiritual warfare" movement that is rife with terrible theology and terrible practices.
      - (2) We can also ignore it to our great peril. Look at any marriage where the man and woman are not actively striving to conform the marriage to God's standard and you see the cost of ignoring the lies of these powers.
    - b. Second, understand also that we do not actively engage these powers.
      - (1) That is not how we are to live, calling down curses upon them or challenging them.
      - (2) **We fight them by simply conforming ourselves by faith to what God calls us to be. We are rebelling against the power of this age by not being conformed to it.**
      - (3) We run the risk of the very thing Jude (8-10) condemns when we decide we are going to take it to those demons.
    - c. Third, recognize that these powers exist but then move on in a greater faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.
      - (1) Realize that they are present and at work. The writers don't tell us to go and engage them. Rather, they refer to them to help explain the effects they have upon humanity, both saved and unsaved.
      - (2) But even more importantly, remember that they are under the sovereign control of God.

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- (3) Give thanks that through Jesus Christ we have victory.
- d. Fourth, see the evils of this age (even the pleasant ones) as being used and twisted by these powers.
  - (1) Do you ever find yourself just shaking your head as things unravel before your eyes in this world?
  - (2) Do you find that there are things that take place that seem to be more than just the work of a few people? A fascinating book is by Erwin Lutzer called *Hitler's Cross*.
  - (3) Economic oppression is seen around this world.
    - (a) We can easily fall prey to this when we think that anyone, with hard work can get themselves out of poverty.
    - (b) But even in this country we have people who are simply trapped. Ask those in the urban poor who hate their situation how they feel. You will find they have a sense of helplessness that they attribute to the "system" but could easily be the work of these powers.
  - (4) Human exploitation undoubtedly is the byproduct of their twisted minds.

### **III. Conclusion.**

- A. So, as Christians we live in this now-and-not-yet reality.
- B. So though we don't actively engage these powers, we, as the people of God, should be trying to resist them through resisting the effects upon this world and humanity.
- C. This is where the Missional Triad comes into play. We are to be actively seeking to be a blessing in our cities.
- D. In addition we should be looking for ways we can alleviate the suffering in this world without compromising the gospel.
  1. Part of this is why the elders are pursuing understanding adoption better and supporting those who might do it. This is why we do Compassion and are part of CareNet.
  2. This is the reason I travel around the world teaching pastors so that they can engage their cultures with the rebellious gospel of Jesus Christ.

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- E. Finally, try to become an expert in living in this world that God called "Good" and which is fallen by the sin of Adam, and delight in it as redeemed people.
  - 1. God shall renew this world one day and that is what we long for.
  - 2. But until that day comes we should still see the glory that is still found in this broken world.
  - 3. We can show people that there is something more than just lust and hate and envy.
    - a. Play your games not for power or prestige but for the sheer pleasure in what "play" actually means.
    - b. Build relationships that are true and deep, not on what you get out of them.
    - c. Eat and drink to God's glory, knowing that all of it is a good gift from him.
    - d. Look at your spouses, your children, your in-laws and your neighbors not as burdens but as fellow image-bearers of the Most High God. Live with them in that way.
    - e. And in all of this remember that you are free to live this way because Jesus has redeemed you and you have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his marvelous light.