

## THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS

This morning I'd like to talk to you about something that most Christians know very little about, and yet it's important for us to know, and above all, very comforting to know. We need to be cognizant of the fact that there's another realm, another dimension that we cannot see with our physical sight, and yet it's just as real as the world we're living in right now with the things we see all around us. The apostle Paul spoke of these things in **2 Corinthians 4:18** when he said we are to, "*look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

So, just as things eternal are far more important than things that are temporary, so that which is unseen is far more important than the things that are seen, and because this is true, I'd like to talk to you this morning about the ministry of holy angels in our behalf.

The words angel and angels plural, are used about 300 times in the Bible, and that doesn't include references to the two classes of angels mentioned as cherubims and seraphims. And so, when something is mentioned that many times in God's word, I think it's important enough that we should know something about it, because it's there for a reason. According to the concordance the word angel means messenger, or ambassador (or the one I like the best), one that is dispatched as a deputy.

As a kid I used to like to watch westerns on TV, and inevitably the bad guys would do something wrong, like rob a bank, and the sheriff would gather together a posse from the men in town and deputize them to go after those evil men and bring them to justice so they couldn't do any more harm to the law abiding citizens in town.

And so, when I think of one in authority dispatching deputies to take care of the bad guys, I think of God deputizing holy angels and dispatching them to take care of the evil angels that are bent on doing harm to God's law abiding people. To me it's comforting to know that God has ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy angels waiting in the ranks to do His bidding when His children are in trouble. How about you? And don't ask me how many ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands is, because no one knows. All we know for sure is that there are plenty of them to do God's bidding.

More than likely, all of us have seen an angel or perhaps angels at some point in our lives without even realizing it, perhaps many times, because angels are able to enter our dimension and take on human form, and there are several examples of this taking place in the Bible. In **Hebrews 13:2** it says, "*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*"

The stories of Abraham and Lot especially come to mind, don't they? Abraham is sitting in the door of his tent in the heat of the day and he sees three men approaching, and he had no idea that these three men were two angels and the Lord Himself. After inviting them to stay and eat with him, at some point these three beings from another realm make themselves known to

Abraham and what the purpose of their visit was, and you know the rest of the story. The point is, angels can physically be in our midst and we not know it.

Same with Lot. He's sitting at the gate of Sodom in the evening and he sees two men approaching and he says, "listen guys, you don't want to spend the night in the streets here because there are sexual perverts that come out at night." And so the two men accept Lot's hospitality to spend the night at his house, but no sooner were they in there when the men of the town wanted to do evil things to the two strangers, and Lot had no idea that his two guests were angels until they struck the evil men with blindness.

Just the other day Cindy and I were reading our morning devotions together from *The Upward Look, page 84*. It's a bit long, but I'd like to read the whole page to you because there are some very interesting things here.

"How few contemplate the unseen agencies. Men are acting their part either for God or for Satan, the Prince of light, or the prince of darkness. All heaven is intensely interested in human beings who seem to be so full of activity, and yet have no thought for the unseen. Their thoughts are not on the Word of God and its instruction. If they would appropriate the Word of God, they would be astonished that there are agencies, good and evil, observing every word and deed. They are in every **(not some, but every)** assembly for business transactions, in councils, and in meetings for the worship of God. **(You wonder why our congress can't seem to get anything done, and when they do it's usually the wrong thing? It's because evil angels are in control and they're completely oblivious to the powers of darkness. Same is true for most churches)** There are more listeners in these public assemblies than can be seen with the natural sight, and every man has his work to do. Those unseen agencies are co-laborers with God or with Satan, and they work more mightily and more constantly than do men. Sometimes the heavenly intelligences draw aside the curtain that hides the unseen world, that we may have our minds withdrawn from the hurry and rush, and consider that there are witnesses to all we do and say when we are engaged in business, or when we think ourselves alone. **(And so, we are never alone, are we?)**

"The Lord would have our perceptions keen to understand that these mighty ones who visit our world have borne an active part in all the work which we have called our own. These heavenly beings are ministering angels, and they frequently disguise themselves in the form of human beings. As strangers they converse with those who are engaged in the work of God. In lonely places they have been the companions of the traveler in peril. In tempest-tossed ships angels in human form have spoken words of encouragement to allay fear and inspire hope in the hour of danger, and the passengers have thought that it was one of their number to whom they had never before spoken.

"Many, under different circumstances, have listened to the voices of the inhabitants of other worlds. They have come to act a part in this life. They have spoken in assemblies, and opened before assemblies human histories, and have done works which it was impossible for human agencies to do. Time and again have they been the generals of armies. **(And I said, what? I**

**don't know what generals or armies, but that's what it says. That suggests to me that sometimes they stick around for awhile and are not just here and gone in a few minutes. This is in the context of what they do on earth as men and not in heaven as angels.)** They have been sent forth to cleanse away pestilence. They have eaten at the humble board of families. Often they have appeared as weary travelers in need of shelter for the night. We need to understand better than we do the work of these angel visitants.”

And I say amen, don't you? We need to understand better than we do the work of these angel visitants. It's going to be interesting when we get to heaven to find out all the times when we have been in the company of angels when we hit the replay button of our lives.

But here's another point we need to be aware of also, and it's this; there are evil angels as well as holy angels who have tried to intervene in our lives and in world affairs to bring us down to their level, and as Christians we haven't been aware of that most of the time either, and worldly people that have not experienced conversion have no idea that they are controlled by evil angels. In fact, we are all controlled, or should I say possessed, to a lesser or greater degree by one side or the other, and it matters that we understand this, because it has eternal consequences one way or the other.

When someone violates the ten commandments, they are being controlled by evil angels without even realizing it. We should understand that a person can be possessed by the devil and not foam at the mouth like the demoniacs of Gergesa. They can even appear to be living a holy life. A person can look like a Christian and be corrupt at heart; in fact they are corrupt at heart if Jesus doesn't abide there. If Jesus is not in the life we automatically default to the power of evil because that's our nature without Christ.

You see, we're all controlled by one of two powers. There are not three! It's one or the other, and it can't be both at the same time, because God does nothing in cooperation with the devil. Jesus said, if we're not willing to give up all that we have, we cannot be His disciple. It has to be all or nothing! The idea that a person can be in a saved condition while living in sin, which is being controlled by the devil by the way, is a deception, and it's an outgrowth of this false idea of thinking that Jesus and the devil can abide in the heart at the same time. And so, it's supremely important to understand this when nearly the whole professed Christian world have fallen for this lie.

If you believe you can be saved in sin, then you have become a part of those the apostle Paul condemns for not having a love of the truth. *“And for this cause (he says) God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,”* better translated “the lie.” *“Having pleasure in unrighteousness,”* which is sin, and believing you are saved while doing it is “The Lie”! And millions of professed Christians are fooled by it today. We won't take the time to do it this morning, but you can read all about this in **2 Thessalonians chapter 2** and **1 John chapter 3**.

God's holy angels have very specific duties to perform in order to save us from destruction and

to help us develop a holy character that God can take to heaven, and there are opposite forces trying to prevent that from happening, and by the choices we make every day, we are cooperating with one side or the other.

God has given us the ministry of angels to help save us and to help us understand that all heaven is interested in our salvation and that He has held back nothing in an effort to see us saved in His kingdom. **Hebrews 1:14** is very clear that all the holy angels are “*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.*” That’s why we’re told that, when Christ came to this world, all heaven was poured out in the one great gift of Himself. God Himself came to us in Christ; and not only that, but in that one great gift all the help that the holy angels can give is included, and of course the Holy Spirit, but that’s a subject for another time. But I will say this; it’s very difficult sometimes to know the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of holy angels. And the reason for this is because they work so closely together that it’s difficult to discern at times.

It’s very important for us to understand that we have a part to play when it comes to how the angels, both good and bad, can help or hinder the progress we need to make in order to walk the narrow way. For instance, if we knowingly go where God has told us not to go, we are limiting the ministry of holy angels in our behalf and enhancing what evil angels can do to bring us down.

In ***Early Writings 124, 125*** we’re given a good example of how this works. Listen, “I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. **(Even if we have to worship at home by ourselves)** God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness.

“I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted, but should be occupied with the present truth, and seeking wisdom that we may obtain a more thorough knowledge of our position, that with meekness we may be able to give a reason of our hope from the Scriptures. While false doctrines and dangerous errors are pressed upon the mind, it cannot be dwelling upon the truth which is to fit and prepare the house of Israel to stand in the day of the Lord.”

The holy angels, that we need so much, will cease their watchful care over us when we go where we know God doesn’t want us to go. This happens each time we needlessly place ourselves in the way of temptation, or give in to the various temptations that Satan and evil angels can invent.

Here we see the same principle at work that we were just talking about a moment ago. Not only can Jesus and the devil not abide in the same heart at the same time, but the holy angels can't help us when we knowingly decide to follow the suggestions of evil angels. Holy and evil does not mix!

And by the way, the evil angels have been dogging our steps all of our lives and they know where our weak points are. They know all about our past sins, because they have been instrumental in causing us to fall, and they are constantly tempting us to repeat our past mistakes or inventing new ways to tempt us to do wrong. But the good news is, holy angels also know all about us, and they are there to help us resist the evil and choose the good. And here's an encouraging point; holy angels are stronger than evil angels, they proved that when war broke out in heaven and the evil angels were cast out. And so, now the holy angels are in the majority. Problem is, the evil were cast into the earth, and that's why we have them to contend with.

Just remember that holy angels excel in strength and we can have them on our side if we so choose. We can choose the strong and righteous invisible army and tell the losers to take a hike, and if we are one with Christ, they will have to obey. That's what God says! **James 4:7** says, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will (what?) flee from you.*" He has to, because that's God's word, and if we have enough faith to believe it, it is so.

If we were more aware that holy angels are watching us and keeping track of all of our words and actions, and even able to read our thoughts, which the evil angels can't do, I think we might be more careful in what we say, what we do, where we go, and what we allow ourselves to think about, don't you? Just think of it; when you are tempted to commit the sin that so easily besets you, and realize that the eyes of holy angels are upon you when you're about to yield to it, don't you think that would give you a little more strength and reason not to do whatever it is you know you shouldn't do?

If another human being was in the same room with you when you're tempted to do what you do when no one else is around, don't you think that would help you to resist? Of course it would! Well, your guardian angel is there, and perhaps other angels, all the time, and an awareness of that should give us incentive to be very careful. Of course love for God should be our motivating factor before anything else, but in times of weakness it doesn't hurt to have a sense of angel presence.

If we go to God when we're tempted to speak or act in a wrong way or go someplace we know we shouldn't go, and ask him in faith for strength, He will give it to us. He'll say to His angels, "There's a person who's trying to resist the power of Satan and has come to Me for help, and I will help him." He'll say to that angel, "Go and stand by that one who is trying to do the right thing, and when the evil angels attempt to lead him astray, gently guide him in the right path, and drive back the powers of the devil."

Every one of our efforts to do right is noticed by God, and it's comforting to know that when the wrath of God comes upon the earth, Jesus will say to the destroying angel, "Spare that person,

because when they were tempted, they prayed to Me to be delivered, and I have washed away their sins. Don't come near to destroy him or her, because he or she is one of My jewels, saved by My blood, and I will fit them to dwell in My heavenly mansions forever. They have overcome the tempter and have gained the victory. They shall never more be tempted, but be free and happy eternally."

Is that what you want friend? You can have it if you choose to submit to God and allow the holy angels to work in your behalf when you're tempted rather than yield to evil angel's suggestions.

In *Manuscript 49, 1897* it says, "All heaven is watching the strivings of every individual soul under every temptation by which men and women shall be beset. If they will resist the temptation, if they will not yield on any point, Satan cannot have the victory. In the books of heaven will stand registered against your name that on such a day Satan sought to overthrow and ensnare one of My redeemed ones, but the tempted one looked to Me, the conqueror, and I gave him or her angels to press back the powerful foe."

Also I read something very encouraging in *Early Writings, pages 269, 270* about the shaking time and the death decree which is yet future, and I'd like to read it to you this morning. It says, "I saw some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, pleading with God. Their countenances were pale and marked with deep anxiety, expressive of their internal struggle. Firmness and great earnestness was expressed in their countenances; large drops of perspiration fell from their foreheads. Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, and again the same solemn, earnest, anxious look would settle upon them.

"Evil angels crowded around, pressing darkness upon them to shut out Jesus from their view, that their eyes might be drawn to the darkness that surrounded them, and thus they be led to distrust God and murmur against Him. Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward. Angels of God had charge over His people, and as the poisonous atmosphere of evil angels was pressed around these anxious ones, the heavenly angels were continually wafting their wings over them to scatter the thick darkness."

Isn't that a great picture of what happens when we are in a spiritual struggle? When a temptation comes; when evil angels are trying to press darkness all around you, you need to pray, and while you're praying visualize the holy angels hovering over you wafting their wings to scatter the darkness, kind of like a thick dark cloud of smoke that gets carried away by a strong wind.

I believe as we think about these things and by faith connect with the unseen world with our spiritual eyesight and realize there's help for the asking, it will go a long way in defeating the designs of the enemy that wants us to share in his own misery. We don't have to give in to evil when we know all heaven is at our disposal.

In *Review and Herald, August 5, 1890* it says, "Scarcely any of us realize that angels are about us; and these precious angels, who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, are saving from us many, many temptations and difficulties. The whole family of heaven is

interested in the families here below; and how thankful we should be for this interest manifested for us day and night.”

And I am thankful, aren't you? We don't realize most of the time that these precious angels are there for us 24/7, because they don't sleep! Do you remember how it says in **Isaiah 40:31** that those who “*wait upon the Lord. . . shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint?*” That's how the angels feel all the time. They are always alert and ready for action and they are never unaware of what's going on.

And I'll tell you another thing you may not know. Every Christian who dies and comes up in the first resurrection will see the face of their guardian angel first thing, even before they see the face of Jesus.

In the book ***Education, page 305*** it says, “Every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death; who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning—what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, . . .”

Oh I tell you friends, we have great things to look forward to. Not only will it be a thrill for us on resurrection morning to see the face of our very own guardian angel, that is unless we're translated without seeing death when Jesus returns, but it will be a thrill for them as well, don't you think? How could it be otherwise? And there's no reason why we will not also have a special relationship with that angel for all eternity.

I believe those of us that are translated without seeing death will see the face of Jesus before we meet our guardian angel, and maybe after sleeping in the dust for a while, if that's the case, we'll need our guardian angel to break us in before we see our Creator and Redeemer, I don't know, but whatever the case there are wonderful things ahead to look forward to, and it'll be a shame to miss out on it simply because we choose to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season rather than suffer affliction with the true people of God while we're here.

And so yes, a guardian angel is appointed to every follower of Christ, and these heavenly beings shield us from the power of the evil angels. Even Satan recognized this when he said to God, Does Job fear you for nothing? You've made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side.” (see **Job 1:9, 10**) And I say praise the Lord, because He does the same for us. In **Psalm 37:7** it says, “*The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear God, and He delivers them.*”

One day when Jesus was with His disciples, they asked Him who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, I'm sure hoping He would say they would be, but instead He called a little child to Him and told His disciples that they needed to be converted and become as a little child if they even wanted to be there, and He also said to them, “*Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of*

*my Father.*” **Matthew 18:10.** And this goes for us older children as well.

How many times did the apostle John refer to the adults he wrote to as little children? Over and over again, right? That tells me that the angels are appointed to minister to all the children of God, no matter their age, and these angels always have access to the Father’s presence.

Remember when Jacob had his dream and saw a ladder that connected earth with heaven and he saw the angels of God ascending and descending upon it? What do they do that for? What’s the significance of going up and down? We know that the ladder represents Jesus who has made that connection by becoming a human being with a fallen nature like ours and sacrificing His life for us, but what are the angels doing as they pass up and down? Have you ever thought about it?

**Acts of the Apostles, 153** says, “Heaven is brought near to earth by that mystic ladder, the base of which is firmly planted on the earth, while the topmost round reaches the throne of the Infinite. Angels are constantly ascending and descending this ladder of shining brightness, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and bringing blessing and hope, courage and help, to the children of men. These angels of light create a heavenly atmosphere about the soul, lifting us toward the unseen and the eternal. We cannot behold their forms with our natural sight; only by spiritual vision can we discern heavenly things.”

Not only do the angels carry our petitions to the Father’s throne, but they do it at the speed of lightening, and even faster! We don’t understand how they can do it so fast, but as soon as our prayer is uttered, that prayer reaches the Father’s ears instantly! And some day we’re going to know all about how that happens. Truly, *“Eye has not seen nor ear heard the things that God has prepared for those that love Him.”*

I can’t close our time together this morning without reading a few verses from **Psalm 91.** **Psalm 91** was written especially for those who would be living in the last days as we see trouble escalating in this world.

**Psalm 91:1-12**, *“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High”, (and the Bible makes it clear that God Himself is our hiding place and we access Him through prayer, especially in our prayer closet) “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. (Why?) For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a*



stone.”

In these verses is a most wonderful description of the coming of the Lord to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, and to give to those who have chosen Jesus as their Redeemer the assurance of His love and protecting care, and we ought to be thankful this morning for promises like this, because one day soon we’re going to see it all come to pass.

When you’re tempted to think you’re all alone in the world, and that you’re outnumbered by the enemy, think of the time when Elisha prayed to the Lord to open the eyes of his frightened servant. Elisha told his servant, *“Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.”* And he asked the Lord to *“Open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”*

Friends, we need to realize that as children of God we are in the majority, even when it looks like we’re not. And believe me, more and more it’s beginning to look like we are not, doesn’t it? And the thing is, it’s only going to get worse, we know that. But, if we will try to view things with our spiritual eyesight and pray for a glimpse of that other dimension we can’t see, we will be much encouraged to keep pressing on the upward way no matter what happens. If we prize the things that are eternal more than the temporal, and the things that are not seen more than the things that are seen, we will be able to hold on without letting go of the Lord’s arm. These are the things I hope you will take away from this study this morning, and that you will be aware of all the heavenly agencies that surround you to protect and guide you safely on your way to the heavenly mansions Jesus has gone to prepare for you. I am so looking forward to it and I hope you are too.