

January 5, 2014

Good morning, Beloved of the Lord. “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

“Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.” (Psalm 103.)

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Romans 15:4). Today, I want to talk with you about that part of those writings which “abound with exceeding great and precious promises, and excellent doctrines, big with consolation to the saints; and both serve much to cherish, support, and maintain a hope of eternal happiness; all which prove the divine authority, excellency, and usefulness of the sacred writings, and recommend the reading of them by us, and the hearing of them explained by others,” (Gill) with regard to Psalm 103:20: **“Bless**

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The angels' service is instructive to us. Their personal strength is excellent. As servants of God we also should see to our own spiritual health and accurate notions of God and His attributes. They are practical in their obedience. They're doers and not just hearers only of the word. (James 1:22). They are attentive while at work, ready to learn more, and holding fellowship with God, who speaks personally to them. Not only, mightily executing the word when heard; but, ever intently listening, ready to catch the intimation of his will. Direct personal communion between the Lord and his messengers seems to be implied. They do all their work in the spirit of joyful praise, blessing the Lord. (Charles H. Spurgeon, commentary on Psalm 103:20)

They hearken to the voice of his word, they look upon God as the great General, and if he give out the word, they give out their strength, and go about the work willingly. They are very attentive to his commands; if he says, Go smite Herod for his pride (Acts 12:23), Balaam for his covetousness (Numbers 22:22-35), David for his vainglory (2 Samuel 23), Sennacherib for his blasphemy (Isaiah 36-37), and Sodom for its uncleanness (Genesis 18-19), presently they go. (William Greenhill, commentary on Psalm 103:20)

Angels are vigilant creatures, and wait for opportunities, and when they come they will not lose them. They neither slumber nor sleep (Psalm 121:4), but hearken constantly what the Lord will say, what opportunity there will be for action; so, in Ezekiel 1:11, they are described with their wings stretched upward, manifesting their watchfulness and readiness for service. When Christ was taken by Judas and his great multitude, Peter drew his sword in his Master's defense; but what did Christ say? Put up thy sword, it is not a time now to fight, but to suffer: thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? I must die, and the Scripture must be fulfilled; but if I would, my Father would bid the angels to aid me, and they presently would come, whole legions of them, yes, all the angels in heaven. (Matthew 26:47-56). Let us learn from angels to watch for opportunities, and take them. There are nicks of time wherein to do the work of Christ. (William Barnhill, commentary on Psalm 103:20) I'm looking at a group of people who study and watch to find those nicks in time to do the work of Christ, and do it. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." (Daniel 11:32)

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The chief excellence of the angels, the main cause of their strength and power, and of their immense superiority to mankind, is this: THEY DO HIS COMMANDMENTS HEARKENING UNTO THE VOICE OF HIS WORD. For this is the only living source of lasting strength and power. They who do the will of God faithfully and obediently, have God for them; and then what or who can be against them? Then that work itself strengthens them; because it is His work. They on the other hand who run counter to the will of God, have God against them; and then what strength do they have? (Julius Charles Hare, 1849, commentary on Psalm 103:20)

These firstborn sons of light always speak the praises of the Lord. Dwelling near to the heavenly throne, they see up close the glory which we would adore. To them is given an exceeding might of intellect, and voice, and force which they delight to use in sacred services for him; let them now turn all their strength into that solemn song which we would send up to the third heaven. (As our first hymn today, last verse, suggests and urges). To him who gave this angelic strength—which is most excellent—let all angelic strength be given. They are his angels, and therefore they love to ring out his praises. And, they have been unwavering in their blessed job from their creation. (Charles H. Spurgeon, commentary on Psalm 103:20).

The Hebrew word for Angel comes from a root word meaning to dispatch as a deputy, a messenger, an ambassador, or a representative. These angels are “spirits.” (They only take on a temporary corporeal existence for job-specific purposes on earth (See Genesis 18 & 19 for the two angels—called “men” by the sodomite hoard—who were on the ground to obtain an accurate report and deliver it back to the Destroyer of Sodom.)) “And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits?” (Hebrews 1:7). These angelic spirits were created by our Lord Jesus Christ (Colossian 1:16) when the heavens were created; and immediately began their work to do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” (Genesis 2:1). “By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” (Psalm 33:6). The Lord quieted Job’s complaining by this question: Where were you when I made heaven and earth, “[w]hen the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). Daniel helps us with the number of these Angels: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” (Daniel 7:9-10).

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This “innumerable company of angels” is with us today, January 5, 2014, at Westboro Baptist Church, in Topeka, Kansas. “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an **innumerable company of angels**, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:22-24).

God’s elect angels have serious business—God’s most important business—to attend to at Westboro Baptist Church. The Westboro Baptist Church—and every Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earth—is at the center of the world’s events, from God’s perspective; and the angels are in the midst of it all. Indeed they have a great desire—by the command of God—to look into the things that happen here and the word of God that is expounded here. “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” (1 Peter 1:10-12).

We, at the house of God, which is the church of God, which is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), have been given a lively hope that we are indeed a candlestick, a golden candlestick, in the midst of which our Lord Jesus Christ walks in resurrection splendor. “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” Revelation 1:13-16. That is the Bible description of the risen Savior in his present role as head of the Church.

And he is the “head over all things to the church.” (Ephesians 1:22). “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church [by means of, or through, the church] the manifold wisdom of God.” (Ephesians 3:10). These principalities and powers are the good angels in heaven. And this, says the Apostle, is all “according to the eternal purpose which he

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purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” (Ephesians 3:11). And, we have great boldness in this matter. “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” (Ephesians 3:12). And, “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” (Ephesians 3:21). Which is to say, the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ today deals with his Church, calls his elect (1 Peter 2:9), gathers them into his little churches (Ezekiel 34:13), enlightens his elect people to the truth (Ephesians 1:18), supplies all their needs in the midst of their deadly enemies (Psalm 23:5), and delivers them from every evil work (2 Timothy 4:18), while they dwell below as sheep in the midst of wolves (Matthew 10:16); is the primary way in which the Almighty God demonstrates His wisdom before the assembled intelligences of the universe; and the primary glory of God Almighty is manifested in no other way.

And who is at the business end of this work? The angels of God, ascending and descending upon the place that God has set up in the earth for the only legitimate public worship of God on the earth, called “Bethel” (Genesis 28:10-15).

And they didn’t just arrive to this work at the House of God in 2014 or even at the start of the New Testament Church age. They have been so employed and so ministering from day one. Esau has sworn to kill Jacob because he stole his birthright, and Rebekah tells him to run, and so he runs: “And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac. ...” (Genesis 28:10-15).

John Gill’s Bible commentary helps us here: “[A]nd, behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: denoting either the providence of God, and the various steps of it, bringing about his own glory and the good of his people; and which is steady, firm, and sure, and reaches to all things here on earth; and in an especial manner is concerned about the people of God, their protection and safety; and is directed and governed according to the will, counsels, and purposes of God in heaven; ... and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it: which may be expressive of the employment of angels in the affairs of Providence, who receive their commission from heaven, and execute it on earth, in which they are diligent, faithful, and constant; and of the

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ministry of them, both to Christ personal, and to his church and people, even to every particular believer; see #John 1:51.” (John 1:51: “And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”)

Just before they stoned Stephen because they could not resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake, he was reminding them that angels have witnessed their wicked rebellion since the dawn of the Church in the Wilderness, and including that entire dispensation of Solomon’s Temple, down to the New Testament Church age, to wit: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: **Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.**” (Acts 7:51-53). Also see, Galatians 3:19 (“Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; **and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator**”) and Hebrews 2:2 (“**For if the word spoken by angels** was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward”) for further amplification of the roll of angels in that age of the Church in the wilderness.

And, what do these angels have to do with us? “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). And, at what level do they minister? This ministry consists in things temporal and spiritual, or what concern both our bodies and our souls; in things temporal, in which they have often been assisting, as in providing food for our bodies, in curing our diseases, in directing and preserving us in journeys, in saving and delivering us from outward calamities, in restraining things hurtful from hurting us, and in destroying our enemies; in things spiritual, as in making known the mind and will of God to us, in comforting us, and suggesting good things to us from God’s word and from his judgments/providences in the earth, and in helping and assisting us against Satan’s temptations; and they will be present with our departing souls at death, and carry us to heaven, and will gather the elect together at the last day. And they are “sent forth” to minister to them in such a way; they are sent forth by Christ, the Lord and Creator of them, who therefore must be superior to them; they do not take this office upon themselves, though, being put into it they faithfully and diligently execute it, according to the will of Christ: and this shows the care of Christ over his people at Westboro Baptist Church who shall inherit salvation, and his kindness to us, and the great honor he puts upon us, to appoint such to minister to us; and since they are of so much use and service, they ought to be respected and esteemed, though not worshipped (Revelation 22:9; Colossians 2:18). (See John Gill’s commentaries on the Bible in expounding Hebrews 1:14.)

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“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Psalm 34:7). Now most say that this “Angel” is the Lord Jesus Christ. But, even so, he conducts a lot of that business by delegation to faithful angels, for they are his deputies, ambassadors, messengers, and representatives; and in this description they are our most powerful guardians.

“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.” (Psalm 91:11-12). Gill says in expounding this verse in Psalm 91: “Which denotes the strength and power of angels to carry the saints in their hands; their tender care of them, such as a parent or nurse have of children; the helpless condition of the people of God, who are like infants, and need to be dealt with after this manner; the condescension of angels to take such an office on them, in submission to the will of God; the constant view they have of the saints, being always in their hands, and so in sight: thus they bear them, up in life, and at death carry their souls to Abraham’s bosom.” And as to that dashing their foot against that stone, he says: “Lest they fall into sin, or into any calamity and distress; lest the least hurt or mischief befall them, or the least injury be done them; The Targum interprets it of the evil concupiscence, or corruption of nature, which is like a stone.” As our beloved brother Charles reminded us of late from Hebrews Chapter 12: we are encouraged (compelled, really) to lay aside that weighty stone, that sin that doth so easily beset us, and run our course with patience, looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith.

We could spend a lot of time talking about the characteristics of these Angels --(e.g. holiness (Matthew 25:3, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26, and Revelation 14:10), by the grace of God they have not lost their first estate of happiness, uprightness and righteousness; and wisdom and knowledge (2 Samuel 14:20), by virtue of their being created to be rational and intelligent creatures of the highest form and class, always in God’s presence beholding his face (Matthew 18:10) and therefore first hand witnesses to the mysteries of providence and divine grace not only by divine revelation but by the church, and their longstanding observation and experience--are amazing and worthy of separate study, appreciation and application)--But the topic of today is their characteristic called their strength. And this is not to be studied and understood in the abstract. Otherwise, where is the “joy [wherewith] ye shall draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:1), the refreshing, and the washing of our feet in the blood of our enemies? (Psalm 58:10: The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.)

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Beloved, in every age, Satan sends his fellow-fallen angels to spy us out in Dothan for to enslave us and kill us and do worse. His hatred and his wrath are great! But like those evil angels who could go so far as the Lord permitted and no further in Job's case, so in ours. (See Job Chapters 1 and 2). "And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, 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." (2 Kings 6:13-17). Recall, four chapters earlier, we read: "And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." (2 Kings 2:11-12). We need to have our eyes of faith opened every day so that we may see and behold the mountains around about us are full of horses and chariots—our very own presence angels, who always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven (Matthew 18:10)—and who are appearing on the scene now to minister in power to us.

Now our favorite illustration of the power of one of these angel spirits is here: "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (2 Kings 19:35). What a turn of a phrase: they arose early in the morning as dead corpses. The most powerful military on the earth at that time—headed up by Sennacherib-- had laid siege to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earth. They were intent upon destroying her. In the process they blasphemed God from one end of the country to the other. You can read that remarkable account in at least three places in the Bible: 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah. That event was not unlike an event this church of the Lord Jesus Christ has experienced. The most powerful military in the earth today laid siege to the Westboro Baptist Church, and in the process blasphemed God from sea to shining sea. As if God's name is not the "Avenger of The Quarrel of My Covenant." (Leviticus 26:25). That is his name, you foolish, brutish military mutts. You can read about them waking up as dead corpses in the reported case of *Snyder v. Westboro Baptist Church*, a United States Supreme Court case published in

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March, 2011. You read that Supreme Court decision and you see the fall-out and you will see that these human beings possessed by evil angels (See Mark, Chapter 5, about the demoniac of Gadarenes) to work us harm have fallen never to get up (“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” (Isaiah 14:1)). If our eyes were enabled we too would have seen armies of angels gathered at the U.S. Supreme Court building in Washington D.C. on the day of oral arguments in that case, in October, 2010. We testified to the huge sodomite crowd outside that day that our Lord Jesus Christ, that Angel of the Covenant of Grace (Malachi 3:1), had walked upon the scene to deliver his people from Satan’s clutches. (“Who gave himself a ransom for all his elect people, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:6). “For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.” (Jeremiah 31:11)) You mocking rebels ask, “Where is the God of judgment?” (Malachi 2:17). Here is the God of judgment.

If one of these angels can do this mighty work on behalf of His Church—think 185,000 dead corpses—imagine what armies/bands/thousands upon thousands of these angels can do? Jacob, after two decades in Mesopotamia with Laban, was traveling back to Isaac’s home, with only women and children. On the eve of meeting up with Esau who intended to kill him as promised because Esau believed Jacob had stolen his birthright (Genesis 27:36), what do we find? (Your quarrel is with God, Esau, for he it is that caused Isaac to be repulsed by you: “And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, *and* he shall be blessed.” (Genesis 27:33). “For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected (repulsed): for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” (Hebrews 12:17) God had commanded before birth of these twins: “The elder shall serve the younger.” (Romans 9:12-13; Genesis 25:23.) You got exactly what you bargained for, Esau. (Genesis 25:29-34). “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?. (Matthew 20:15).) “And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.” (Genesis 32:1-2) Mahanaim means “two armies.” The Jewish writers estimate 120,000 angels surrounded Jacob on all sides there to conduct him safely. It was not a tea party; it was war! Now I’m no mathematician, but my calculator says that 120,000 multiplied by 185,000 equals 22 Billion, 200 Million. Just in one night’s work. That’s the potential for a lot of dead corpses waking up in hell. The Father of Spirits turned

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Esau's murderous rage into a peaceful disposition, and we find that that was permanent fix when we read about them burying their father Isaac together later (Genesis 35:29). But the alternative for Esau would not have been good for him in light of the power of these angels. God predestinated the work he would perform in Esau's heart; these angels were for Jacob's comfort and strengthening in the face of imminent death. Jacob never forgot that angelic scene, you can be sure. And, neither should we. There is every reason to be confident that as promised and as performed for Jacob, it will be performed for each of God's Jacobs. It gives a fresh perspective on: "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:36-37). (Also see 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Isaiah 64:4 for your comfort). But all of these amazing deliverances administered by angels under the direct commandment and pursuant to the omnipotence of God are mere adumbrations of that great redemption and deliverance by our Redeemer who will stand last upon the earth, as Job prophesied (Job 19:25); while his elect people sing that song: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Revelation 5:9). Now that will be some singing! And as our Redeemer rips off those seals, angels are dispatched for major duty and they perform exploits seldom seen up to that day. Search "Angel*" in the book of Revelation and your search engine will light up like the proverbial X-mas tree (74 times in those 22 chapters). Our beloved brother Tim gave us a view of that Redemption from the book of Revelation recently in a sermon. The book of Revelation puts the meat on the bones to these verses: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

I love you. Amen.