

## ANGELIC INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL NO. 2697

A SERMON  
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*“Which things the angels desire to look into.”  
1 Peter 1:12.*

THE apostle Peter wrote his first Epistle to a persecuted people, many of whom were in great heaviness through manifold trials. The sufferings of the early Christians are something terrible even to think upon; the world has scarcely ever beheld more relentless cruelty than that which pursued the first servants of our Divine Lord and Master. Peter, therefore, when he wrote to these tried saints, sought to cheer and encourage them. What, then, did he write about? Why, about the gospel; for there is nothing like the simple doctrine of salvation by redemption to comfort the most distressed spirits.

The chapter from which our text is taken is just as plain as the gospel itself. Peter here tells the elect strangers that they were “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away;” and he also reminds them that they “were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold;” “but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In this chapter we have all the great central truths of the gospel—election, redemption, regeneration, effectual calling, sanctification, and final perseverance. Brothers and sisters, whenever we need consolation, let us never go away from the gospel to find it. The child of God always finds his best comfort in the things of God. If your comforts can only come to you from worldly society, it is quite clear that you belong to the world; but if you are one of God's true children, all that you need to cheer you under the heaviest trial is already provided for you in the gospel of Christ, and will speedily be applied to you by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, if you only seek it at His hands. Peter here prescribes a remedy for lowness of spirits and for general depression. That remedy is, to take a deeper interest in the things of God, to give ourselves more intensely to the consideration and contemplation of them. They are well worthy of all the thought that we can give to them; for if the prophets, those men with the grandest of human minds, divinely inspired, yet had to search deeply to understand God's Word as revealed to them, there must be something in it that we shall do well to search out; and if the holy angels, those mighty intelligences, do not so much see, as “desire to look into,” the things of God, there must be some very deep things hidden within the simplicities of the gospel which you and I ought to search out. If we did search them out, we would be greatly cheered and comforted. Our minds would be taken off those trials which now so often vex us; we should be lifted high above them, we should not travel slowly and painfully over this rough road, and have our feet cut with every sharp flint, and our spirit pierced with every sore trial; but we would rise, as on eagle's wings, and ride on the high places of the earth, and rejoice in the Savior who has done such great things for us. We would eat the fat things full of marrow which God has provided for those who diligently study His Word, and prize it above all earthly treasures.

I am not going to say anything at this time about the high interest which the ancient prophets took in God's Word; but I shall confine myself very much to the interest which angels take in it, in order that I may stir you up to imitate their example. I want, first, to remind you that *angels take an active interest in the gospel of our salvation*; and, secondly, to show you that *angels are eager students of it*: “which things the angels desire to look into.”

**I.** First, I want to remind you that ANGELS TAKE AN ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE GOSPEL OF OUR SALVATION.

It is true that *they are not interested in it for themselves*. They have never sinned; and, consequently, they need no atonement, and no forgiveness. Doubtless, they have some sort of indirect interest in it, which I will not attempt to explain just now; but, certainly, as far as the gospel brings salvation, healing, pardon, justification, cleansing, angels do not need it. Never having been defiled, they need not to be washed; and being perfect in their obedience, they need not to be forgiven for any shortcomings. And yet they take a deep interest in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; what, then, shall I say of the madness of those who are defiled by sin, and yet have no interest in the fountain where they can be washed whiter than snow? What shall I say of the fatal folly of those who are guilty, and yet take no thought about the method of pardon which God has provided in Christ Jesus His Son, and our only Savior?

The angels are not even interested in the gospel *because of its relation to any of their fellows*, for fallen angels have no part nor lot in its provisions. When they fell from their first estate, God left them without hope forever; and they abide in their rebellion against Him, waiting for the awful day when they shall receive the full recompense of their infamous revolt. There is no mercy for fallen spirits. See how God exercised His sovereignty; when men and angels had both sinned, He passed by the greater sinners, and took up the lesser ones. The fallen spirits “He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Yet He looked on men, the creatures of a day, with eyes of pity and compassion, and sent His Son to earth, in our nature, that He might redeem us from the wrath which was justly our due. The angels have no direct interest in the death of Christ, and the blood of Christ, because of any blessing which will come through Him to any of their former angelic companions; yet they desire to look into these things. What, then, shall I think of myself, and of you, my brother, if, being saved ourselves, we take little or no interest in the gospel as the one means of saving our fellow men? Shame upon us if we have less pity for mankind than angels have, for men are our brothers, and nothing can save them but the gospel of Jesus; and, therefore, our common humanity ought to make us seek their welfare, and we ought to take the deepest imaginable interest in the things which make for the peace of their immortal souls.

Angels take a deep interest in the gospel *because they observe God’s interest in it*. That for which God cares, angels care for at once. That which grieves the Holy Spirit, must be grievous to holy angels, too; and that which gladdens the heart of God must also make glad the spirits that bow adoringly around His throne. The holy ones cry, each one to his fellow, “God is glorified in saving sinful men. Our blessed Lord and Leader went down to earth to accomplish the redemption of the fallen; therefore, let us learn all we can, concerning His wondrous work; and wherever there is anything that we can do to help it on, let us stand, with outspread wings, eager to fly at the command of God.”

Doubtless, the angels also take an interest in the gospel *because they are full of love*. Those pure spirits love as surely as they live; and not only do they love their God, and love one another, but they also love us who were made a little lower than the angels. They have a great affection for us—very much more, I imagine, than we have for them. We are their younger brothers, as it were, and we are, by reason of our flesh and blood, linked to materialism, while they are pure spirits; yet they do not envy us the love of God, neither do they despise us on account of our faults and follies; though, I think, they must often wonder at us. They must sometimes be ready to ask questions concerning our strange behavior, just as two of them did when Christ had risen from the dead, and Mary Magdalene was weeping. Those angels were full of joy because Christ had risen, so they said to her, “Woman, why do you weep?” What could there be to weep about when Jesus had risen from the dead?! Ah, beloved! The angels must often be astonished at us, and think we are the strangest creatures that can be; yet they love us, and therefore they take a great interest in that gospel which promotes our highest good. They know what we too frequently forget, that nothing can make us as happy as for us to be holy, and that nothing can make us holy but being washed in the blood of Jesus, and being renewed by the Holy Spirit. Out of their homage to God, and their brotherhood to man, comes that interest which makes them desire to look into the deep things of God and His gospel.

*The angels have always taken an interest in all that concerns men.* Some of them stood at the gate of Eden, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep our first father out, should he attempt to force his way back when he had lost his right to all its joy, even as the most loving spirit in the world is still upon the side of justice, and believes that God is righteous, even though paradise is lost, and man is doomed to eat bread in the sweat of his face. We are on man's side, but much more on God's; and we say, "Let God, the ever Just One, be glorified, whatever becomes of the sons of men."

After that fatal day of the Fall, the angels constantly watched over men here below, and frequently spoke with one and another of them as God sent them with messages of mercy to Abraham, or to Isaac, or to Lot, or to Jacob, or to others of the human race. But there was a great day when, in solemn pomp, the chariots of God, which are "twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," came down to Mount Sinai, when the law was proclaimed. The angels were there as the courtiers of the great King, to give additional solemnity to the declaration of the law of God. That they should have been present on that august occasion shows their interest in the sons of men.

But I like better to speak to you of their coming to announce the birth of Him of whom we sing, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." When that birth, which they had announced, took place, how gladly did they come and hover over Bethlehem's fields, and sing the grand chorale, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." It was their intense interest in us that made them glad that our Redeemer was born. Then, as we sang at the commencement of this service—

*"In all His toils and dangerous paths  
They did His steps attend,  
Oft paused, and wondered how at last  
The scene of love would end."*

At that notable time when He was tempted in the wilderness, and was with the wild beasts, when the devil had left Him, angels came and ministered to Him. They were ever near Him while He was here, always invisibly attendant upon His footsteps. You remember how there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him when He was in His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane; it was a wondrous thing that the Son of God should have strength infused into Him by an angelic messenger. With what awestruck interest the angels must have watched our Lord upon the cross!—

*"As on the tottering tree He hung,  
And darkness veiled the sky,  
They saw, aghast, that awful sight,  
The Lord of Glory die!"*

But glad were they to descend to His empty sepulcher, and to enter it, and guard the place where for a while the sacred casket of His body had lain. They spoke to His disciples, and comforted them by telling them that He had risen from the dead; and, all along, they took such interest in everything relating to Him because they recognized in Him the Savior of sinful men—

*"They brought His chariot from above,  
To bear Him to His throne;  
Clapped their triumphant wings, and cried,  
'The glorious work is done.'"*

Nor is this all. We know, from Scripture, that they not only watched over the Savior, but *they rejoice over penitents*. The Lord Jesus has told us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents;" that is to say, there is joy in God's heart, and the angels can see it. They stand in God's presence, and they can see that God is glad; and we know that they also share that gladness. In the parable of the lost sheep, our Savior represents the shepherd calling together his friends and his neighbors, and saying to them, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." So they do, I am sure; they rejoice over every rescued one that is brought home upon the shoulders of the good Shepherd.

And, beloved, *they watch over every believing soul*. This is one of their chief offices, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" That promise which Satan misquoted is true to every child of God: "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

From what spiritual evils they guard us, it is not for me to attempt to tell; nor to try to describe how, often, in mid-air, there are fierce fights between the demons from hell and the good spirits from heaven; or how the prince of the power of the air is baffled and driven back by Michael the archangel as he comes to take care of the living body of Christ, as once of old he guarded the dead body of Moses. Ah! We little know how much we owe to these invisible agents of the ever-blessed God. They are deeply interested in all His children. The parable tells us that Lazarus died, “and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” What that expression means, I shall not attempt to explain; but I am quite sure that when we who love the Lord die, angels will have something to do with our departure, and with our introduction into the world of happy spirits, and into the presence-chamber of the Lord our God. I like Bunyan’s account of the pilgrims passing through the river, and the shining ones meeting them on the other side, and leading them up the steep ascent into the Celestial City where they see their Master’s face with joy, and go no more out forever.

Nor will they have done with us even then; for when we shall be with God eternally shut in, and safe from all danger of falling and sinning, the angels will swell the music of our continual song, for they shall sing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” Yet we shall be able to sing what they cannot, “You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Further, these dear attendants of our wandering footsteps here below, these patient guardians of our nightly hours, these angel guides, who shall be our companions in death when wife and child and friend can go no farther with us, *these glorious beings shall learn from our lips in heaven the manifold wisdom of God.* They will cluster around us amazed and gladdened as, one by one, we stand upon the sea of glass; and they will ask us to rehearse again and again the wonders of redeeming love, and to tell them what conversion meant, and what sanctification meant, and how the power and wisdom and grace and patience of God were seen in the experience of each one of us; and we shall be their joyful teachers, world without end.

Have I not proved to you that angels take an active interest in the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? And may I not come back to this practical point—do you also take an active interest in the gospel—you in whose nature Christ appeared—you sons of men—you who must be forever lost unless the precious blood of the bleeding Lamb is sprinkled upon you?—

*“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by,  
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?”*

It was for such as you that He died, even for the guilty sons and daughters of men, “for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” He took up men, not angels; shall they, then, be interested in the gospel, and shall not you, whom it especially concerns, also be interested in it? I have already reminded you that they have no brother angels to be converted by the gospel; they have no sister angels to be turned to God by the story of Calvary; yet they are deeply interested in the gospel and also in us; and will not you, my fellow Christians, take a deeper interest in the work of God, and in the propagation of the gospel, when your own flesh and blood must be converted by it, or else must eternally die? Our sisters and brothers, our sons and daughters, our wives and husbands, possibly even our parents, will perish forever unless Jesus Christ is brought to them, and they are brought to Him. What are you doing, you careless professors, you who can go calmly to sleep while men and women are being damned? What are you thinking of, you who eat the fat, and drink the sweet in the courts of the Lord’s house, and yet never show to the prisoners this way to liberty, nor tell to the dying the good news that “there is life for a look at the Crucified One,” nor say to the perishing that there is salvation even for them in Christ Jesus your Lord? Up, up! I charge you, by every swift-winged angel who takes an interest in the cross of Christ, and in the salvation of men, awake you, sons of men; if you may, anyhow, be the means of saving some, be active in the service of that Savior who gave His all for you. God bless that exhortation to all whom it concerns!

**II.** Now we turn to the second point, which is this—that ANGELS ARE EAGER STUDENTS OF THE GOSPEL, and of all the truths connected with it: “Which things the angels desire to look into.”

It is quite certain, then, that *angels do not know all that is in the gospel*, for they desire to look into it. All the gospel is not known to them, and I do not think that it is all known to any of us. I have occasionally met with certain brethren, who have professed to have the whole of the gospel condensed into five points of doctrine, so that they could put it all into their waistcoat pocket, and carry it there; and they seemed to think that they had not anything more to learn. If one tried to teach them any other truth beside what they already knew, they were angry, for they did not want to know anymore. They are not like the holy angels, for they desire to look into these things. Dr. John Owen was, perhaps, the most profound divine who ever lived; yet Dr. John Owen could not know, on earth, as much about certain things as angels did; and I should say that, this very day, he desires still to look into the mystery of redeeming love and the glory of Christ of which he wrote with such wonderful power. The apostle Paul had been converted many years when he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, yet in it he expressed the longing of his heart that he might know Christ. But did he not know Him? And if he did not, who did? No doubt, he felt that there was so much of Christ that he had not known that what he did know amounted to very little. I have heard the word perfection used very glibly by some who seemed to me to know little of its meaning; but will any sane man claim that he has attained to perfection in knowledge? To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "If any man thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." The mystery of redemption was hidden in Christ from eternity, and it was only made known to the Church or even to the angels gradually. They do not yet know everything. Concerning His second coming, our Lord said to His disciples, "But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

The devil also does not know everything. I am sure that Satan did not know that Christ came into the world to redeem men by dying for them, or else he would never have stirred them up to put Him to death. He would have been far too cunning for that; he would have tried, if possible, to keep Christ alive so that we might not have been redeemed by Him. The devil does not know as much as he thinks he knows, even now; and, often, he is outwitted by a simple-hearted child of God, who knows how to believe in God, and is brave enough to do the right thing. Neither men, nor prophets, nor angels, nor devils know all about the gospel yet. They need still to go on studying, and meditating, and contemplating, as the holy beings before the throne of God are doing: "which things the angels desire to look into."

But, brethren, though they do not yet know all about Christ, and His gospel, *they want to know all they can*. They have many other subjects to study. There are all the worlds that God has made, and possibly they have liberty to range over them all; yet I do not read with reference to the marvels of astronomy, "which things the angels desire to look into." Angels doubtless know much more than all our scientific men do concerning the former ages of this world; they could tell much about the various formations and strata of which geologists talk, yet I do not find it recorded that the angels have any particular desire to look into those things. When God created the world, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They have oftentimes admired the providential arrangements of God, and praised the wise Ruler who guides all things with infinite wisdom. But now their chief contemplations seem to be fixed on Christ and His gospel.

Just notice two or three passages of Scripture. Turn first to Exodus 25:20, where we read concerning the cherubim, who belong to one order of angels: "The cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be;"—"toward the mercy seat," as if their eyes were continually fixed upon the redemption of Christ, the propitiation worked out by His sacrifice. In Daniel's day, these blessed spirits took the greatest conceivable interest in knowing all they could about our redemption. If you turn to Daniel 8:13, you can read what that man of God wrote: "Then I heard one saint—'one holy one'—speaking, and another holy one said unto that certain holy one which spoke, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation?" "How long?"—that was the question which the holy ones asked long before Christ descended to earth. Read also Daniel 12:5—"Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" They asked again and

again, “How long?” All their thoughts were concentrated upon the things of God, and they desired to look into them.

Now I want you to remember, in order that it may humble us, that *angels have very keen intellects*. I believe that they far excel us in their prayers of thought; and yet, though they have learned so much about the gospel, they do not pretend to have come any further than this, they desire to look into it. You and I, perhaps, suppose that we know all about the gospel; and that we do not need to have hours of study, and thought, and prayer, and the unction of the Holy Spirit. Poor miserable fools! Angels, who are vastly superior to us in intelligence, have gone no further than to have the desire to learn and to know; I am afraid that many of you have not got as far as that. It is a grand thing to desire to look into these things; it proves that we already know something of their worth when we desire to know more.

Remember, also, that *the intellects of angels have never been warped by prejudice*. There is not a man among us who is not prejudiced to some extent. Our parents warped us in one direction, and our companions have warped us another way, and we have all of us the propensity to take a one-sided view of things, even though we may be perfectly ignorant of the bias; and, sometimes, this prejudice of ours prevents us from seeing clearly; but it is not so with the angels. There is no beam, nor even a mote, in their eye; their knowledge is not infinite, but it is wonderful knowledge as far as it goes; yet even they see not all that there is in the gospel, for, of it, as of the love of God, it can truly be said—

*“The first-born sons of light  
Desire in vain its depths to see;  
They cannot reach the mystery,  
The length, and breadth, and height.”*

Then, again, *the angels have been long looking into these things*. I know not what the age of the angels may be; we know nothing of any creation of angels since the creation of the world. In the long ages before man trod this earth, angels had begun to think of looking into the wonders of God’s grace; yet, after thousands of years, they do not fully comprehend the mysteries of redeeming love. Ah, my brothers and sisters, the gospel is a boundless thing, even as your ruin was infinite and horrible beyond conception; and woe to the man who tries to make out that there is but a little hell, and a little God, and but little wrath of God! As surely as your overthrow was inconceivably terrible, so the designs of God for your redemption, and your exaltation in Christ, are inconceivably magnificent. “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” Some of us have very large expectations of what God means to make even of His creatures that are now cooped up in flesh and blood; but our highest anticipations will probably be far exceeded by the glorious reality. Even angels do not yet fully know, after all their study, what the mighty love of God has done and will yet do for us.

Do not forget, too, dear friends, that *angels are not subject to such infirmities as we are*. I know that I have forgotten a great deal more than I know, and I suppose that most of you have done the same; and when we have learned a thing, we are often like people who take up a handful of water; it is soon all gone. What leaky sieves our memories are! Angels, however, have no such failure of mind. They have never sinned; and, therefore, from much of our infirmity, they must be altogether free. Yet, though far superior to us in this respect, this is the position they have reached, they stand over the mercy seat, with wings outstretched, and with their eyes continually fixed upon that token of the propitiation, desiring to look into it. That is where you and I also stand; if we are truly humble, we feel that this is as far as we have come as yet.

Now, let us inquire—*What are the things which the angels desire to look into?* I can only refer very briefly to them.

They are, first, the incarnation, life, and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; the way in which God could be just, and yet justify the ungodly; that sacred art by which the suffering of the Law-giver made a sufficient recompense to the offended law; the wondrous power of those sufferings God-ward and manward; how these sufferings have broken men’s hearts, and separated them from their sins; how they have given them joy and peace, and united them forever to their God. You and I have only seen the sparkle on the surface of the crimson sea of redemption; we cannot understand the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ our Lord; so let us still desire to look into it, as the angels do.

Next, they desire to know something concerning the resurrection of Christ. “How do you know that?” you ask. Why, the verse before the one containing our text speaks of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” So angels love to think of Christ as risen from the dead, of Christ ascended, and of Christ yet to come in His glory. They desire to gaze into that mystery, and to learn how the glorious God can become yet more glorious by taking upon Himself our nature, and so magnifying His grace above all His name, by redeeming fallen men, and by lifting them up into communion with God.

Angels desire to look into all the mystery of human hearts—how they are fallen, how they are regenerated, how they are preserved, how they are sanctified, how they are strengthened, how they are taught, how they are perfected. There is a wonderful field for their inspection there, in the work of the Holy Spirit upon the sons and daughters of Adam, by virtue of the death of Christ.

And angels want also to know what God is going to do with this poor world. It is an awful problem to us; and so it is to them, I expect. Can you make this world out? Did you ever try to understand it? It is a dreadful nut for anyone to crack—all these millions of men continually dying without God, and without Christ, and without hope. What are to be the eternal issues of it all? How will it come out that God is glorified at the last when such multitudes perish? There are some brethren who think they know all about this mystery; they have a philosophy which explains it all. I have no such philosophy; nor do I wish to have. I sometimes found, when I was a child, that it was a pleasant thing for me to be with my father, and to hear him talk even when I did not fully understand what he was talking about; and so I find it a blessed thing to get near to God, and to see what He is doing, even when I do not know what He is doing, for I am perfectly satisfied that He cannot do anything that is wrong. Still, angels and men may join in the common desire to look into the wonderful working of God’s providence and grace.

But the angels also desire to look into the glory that shall follow. What is the glory that is yet to come to those spirits of just men made perfect who, as yet, have not their glorified bodies, but are waiting for them until the resurrection trumpet shall sound? What will be the glory of that moment when, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed? And what will be the glory of that dread hour when heaven and earth shall gather before the last tribunal, and on the great white throne the Judge shall sit, and all born of woman shall be gathered before Him, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good, or whether they have been evil? And what glory it will be, before that day has closed, when over all the world of sinners the waves of God’s infinite wrath shall roll, and they shall sink to the bottom like a stone, never to taint the earth again! And what a glory it will be when all those on the King’s right hand, all the blood-washed, all the redeemed, shall stream up to their everlasting thrones to sit forever with their conquering Leader, and reign eternally, peers in the palace of the King, forever adoring, forever blessing His holy name! Oh, what glory will be there! I will not attempt to describe it, for even the angels, who are in heaven, desire to look into this mystery, for even they scarcely know what will be the glory of “the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.”

You know that the Greeks had, every now and then, a great gathering of all the nation in what they called their general assembly. Everyone was represented there—poet and philosopher, tragedian and military man. All the glories of Greece were there. Well, there is to come a general assembly, an ecumenical council of the entire Church of God; and when they shall all be there on the plains of heaven—prophets, confessors, apostles, martyrs, humble men and women from every part of the world—not one of the redeemed will be absent, but they there with their King in the midst of them, what a shout of victory, what hallelujahs, what songs of joy, what triumphant *jubilates*, shall welcome that glad day! By God’s grace, I shall be there. My hearer, will you be there? Are you sure of it? If so, let the glad anticipation of it rejoice your heart even now; though you do not know what the full realization of it will be, for even angels, who have seen the lesser gatherings of the saints, have not yet seen the one universal assembly, the gathering of all the clans, the coronation of the Prince, the marriage of the bride, the Lamb’s wife, and all the glory of God, and the splendor of the infinite meridian brilliance that will be displayed before the wondering eyes of God’s elect saints and God’s elect angels. They do not know what it is to be, nor do you; but we as well as they desire to look into it, and I hope we all desire to be there.

Now let me close by saying that, *as the angels are such deep students of the things of God, let us try to be the same.* I wish that I could stir up all my dear friends who are saved to try to look more closely into the things of God. I am afraid that we are going to have a greater proportion of superficial believers than we have had in the past, for we have so many people who are always hallooing about their religion. God bless them, and let them halloo as loudly as they like; but I wish that they had something more to halloo about. There are some who are always crying, “Believe, believe, believe;” but, for the life of them, they could not tell you what it is that you have to believe. And many shout, “Hallelujah!” who do not know what “Hallelujah!” means, or they would be far more reverent towards that blessed word, “Praise to Jehovah!” We want, brethren, and sisters, that you who are saved should seek to know how and why you were saved. You who have a hope of salvation should know the reason for the hope that is in you. Study the Scriptures much. In the Puritan days, there used to be a number of contemplative Christians, who shut themselves up to study the Word of the Lord, and so became masters of theology. Perhaps some were not as practical in winning souls as they ought to have been; but now we are getting to the opposite pole of the compass. We have many who are rushing about, and professing to feed the people; but what do they give them? Where is your bread, sir? “Oh, I could not let these poor people wait.” But why do you not go and fill your basket? You have nothing in it. “Oh! I had not time to do that; I wanted to go and give them”—give them what? Give them half of the nothing that you have brought? That will do them no good at all. There is nothing like having good seed in the basket when you go out to sow; and when you go to feed the hungry, there is nothing like having good bread to give them; and that cannot be the case spiritually, unless we are diligent students of the Word, unless we search the deep things of God. By all means let us advance our forces into the recesses of the enemy’s country, but let us secure our communications, and let us have a good firm basis of Scriptural knowledge, otherwise mischief will come to our scattered powers. By all means be enthusiastic, by all means be intense; but you cannot keep a fire burning without fuel, and you cannot keep up real intensity and enthusiasm without a knowledge of Christ and an understanding of the things of God, “which things the angels desire to look into.”

Now, dear friends, those of you who have nothing to do with this matter, I would like you to go away thinking that, if an angel cares about these things, and if an angel studies them, it is time that you did the same. I know that you are going to take your degree at the University, good sir, and I am very glad that you are likely to secure a good position in life; but I hope that you are not so foolish as to think that you know more than the angels; and if they desire to look into these things, permit me to ask you to study your Bible as well as all the other classics, for this is the best classic after all. I know, dear sir, that you are a masterly thinker; you can make a great many hypotheses, and pull them to pieces again; but I wish, for once, that you would consider this hypothesis—that, perhaps, you are not as wise as the angels. I should not wonder if that hypothesis should prove to be true. I have often noticed that people who rail at the gospel do not know what it is. Many speak against the Bible; but if they were asked, “Did you ever read it?” they would have to answer, “No.” He who studies God’s Word is usually conquered by it; he falls in love with it, and feels the power of it. So, as the holy angels desire to look into it, pray look into it yourself, good sir; and, on your looking there, may God give you to see Jesus, for all who look unto Him shall be saved forever. May you be one of that blessed company, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

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