

## Behind the Scenes

If you've ever had to work "behind the scenes," then you know how much work goes into making something happen. For those who aren't behind the scenes, there is an **ignorance and (almost) lack of appreciation** for the finished product. Things just get taken for granted. **They just "magically happen."** Ask any guy: Weddings just happen, right? Guys just don't understand all the "behind the scenes" stuff that goes into a wedding. The same goes for teaching. Parents don't understand all the "behind the scenes" work that goes into teaching a room full of kids. Work, parenting... you name it. Even things around church like food pantries and rummage sales and kitchen remodels... if you're not aware of all that goes on behind the scenes, you tend to not appreciate just how much work goes into making these things reality.

This is why we take special time out of the Church year to give thanks to God for all the "behind the scenes" work of His holy angels. Whether you want to admit it or not, we truly don't understand all the work that goes into protecting and caring for us. That's not to say that God needs any help. He's God. He's almighty and all-powerful. **But... our Lord commissions His angelic army to constantly watch over us, fight for us, protect us, and care for us.** Think "Guardian Angel."

We get a glimpse of this in the Old Testament lesson, where our Lord Christ Himself speaks to Daniel about His archangel Michael coming to help Him battle and repel the evil angels (princes) who had come to Persia in an attempt to thwart God's good plan for His beloved Israel. If you remember, Israel had been in captivity in Babylon (Persia) for decades, taken captive by the Babylonian, King Nebuchadnezzar. **This was all part of God's good plan.** The Israelites had rebelled against God. They had lost their way, and refused to repent. God sent in Nebuchadnezzar in order to discipline His rebellious children and call them to repentance. Fifty years later, King Cyrus is now in charge of Babylon. King Cyrus is the one who will decree that the Israelites are now free to return to Israel. Again, this is all part of God's good plan. **Do you think that the devil and his evil minions are just going to sit back and let it all happen?** As God Himself says in Revelation: *"The devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"* Recognizing that God's plan for the Messiah is to get Israel out of Babylon and back into the Promised Land, the devil and his minions do all they can to **obstruct and overthrow.** But notice how they go about their evil business. They can't win with Israel, so they try a different way. They try to come in through the back door of pagan government, working on all the kings and powerful people of Babylon. Get the government to do their evil bidding. Prevent the Israelites from returning to Israel.

This is why God fights. He fights, not the kings of Persia (who will be doing His will; unbeknownst to them), ***but the wicked angels who are fighting behind the scenes.*** Archangel Michael comes to help fight these wicked angels. He comes to fight the good fight in obedience to his Lord, and on behalf of God's beloved children. Remember: Our Lord Christ Himself declares that Michael is the "great prince," the archangel who has charge over God's faithful. ***That's us too!*** And notice: We're not speaking here in the individual sense; i.e., the wicked angels are working on individual kings and Michael is fighting only for Daniel. This is a HUGE reality concerning ***entire nations and governments.***

Ask yourself: Can whole groups of people be tempted to evil? Can entire nations and governments work evil against God and His people? And before anyone confuses "evil" with "I don't like that individual because he's a jerk and I don't like his hair or his tax policy," just think back to all the evil that has become "normalized" and accepted over these past many decades. How long have dads been absent from the home and families splintered? How long has divorce been perfectly acceptable? Sex outside of marriage? Shacking up instead of marrying? ***When was the sexual revolution again?*** Slander? Covetousness? Every politician in your life runs on those platforms. **Those demons have been at work on this nation and people for a LONG time.** And nobody really balks anymore. We vote for it. It's "normal" now.

Notice: I haven't even touched on evils such as infanticide in the name of "choice, freedom, and women's health." When was Roe vs. Wade passed into law? ***Those demons have been working their evil influence since before I was born!*** Even many Christians nowadays justify abortion in certain cases, as if it's okay to transgress God's command and murder *sometimes*. Just think back 10-20 years ago. Homosexual marriage? It's law now; ***settled/celebrated law.*** Remember how the White House (*We the people*) was lit up in rainbow colors celebrating this monumental event? **Yay, evil!** To deny it; to dare to agree with God and call it "evil," to even do something as simple as refuse to celebrate it by not baking a cake or making a flower arrangement ***is now against the law.*** To say that there are only two genders—male and female—is becoming lawless. It's considered a hate crime in parts of our own country (and it's spreading). What ***God calls "good" man now calls evil, and what man calls "good" God calls evil. Still don't think that the evil angels work on whole groups and nations and governments? Lord, have mercy! Save us from all this evil; the evil devils and our own evil selves.***

But that's just it: He has saved us. He does save and deliver us. Don't take all this persistent and increasing evil to mean that God is somehow losing the fight. **He's not.** He's in total control and working all things for the good of those who love Him. Folks: You don't realize all that is going on "behind the scenes." You don't realize the great spiritual battles that are being fought constantly between

those evil angels and our guardian angels. As bad and evil as things are nowadays, you don't realize just how wicked things *could be* if all holy restraint/protection was removed. No Christian in America is being fed to lions yet, are they? We don't see behind the curtain. And even if all this (daily bread) was taken away from us, we still have our faith in Christ. No matter how bad and evil things may get, "*for us fights the valiant One, whom God Himself elected.*" This same Lord Christ, our mighty fortress and Savior, appoints and sends His holy angels to protect us and minister to us. ***The devil and his evil minions do not have the power/authority to take your faith from you!*** If they could, they would. But they can't. Thanks be to God!

We don't see all that goes on "behind the scenes" in this veil of tears and dark valley of shadowy death. The devil is constantly on the prowl, seeking to devour us; seeking to overthrow God's good and gracious will; you know... the will that desires the death of no man; the will that desires that all men turn and repent and hold fast to Him and His grace. We don't see all the angelic "behind the scenes" work, but that's precisely why we take a little time today to meditate on it and give thanks to God for His precious gift of heavenly angelic care. ***No matter how bad things may get or seem, God has already won.*** He sends His holy angels to keep watch over us and protect us—constantly.

Side-note: One of my old professors loved to speak on the Matthew text concerning the guardian angels of the littlest faithful babies and how they *always* behold the face of the heavenly Father. He explained it like this: The littlest ones, in our Lord's own words, ***believe in Him***. They have saving faith; the purest saving faith on this side of eternity. \*They don't have a faith that's become ***jaded and weak*** [like we do]. Their precious little faith hasn't yet become ***corrupted*** like ours. And—yes—these littlest ones, while still sinful, aren't nearly as sinful as we are. They can't say, think, or do all that we say, think, and do in our "more mature sinfulness." That comes with time/experience. Consequently, their guardian angels can report back to God every day and not feel the shame that ours do. They can behold God's face. My guardian angel? I'm sure he has to avert his eyes and bury his face in shame. ***That's not the angel's fault. That's my sinful fault.*** And I don't see it all. I can only imagine how miserable I make life for my guardian angel. Lord, have mercy!

Folks: No matter how bad things may get or seem, **God has already won.** We have His Word and promise that even in those last days, when it's *never* been as bad/evil in all of history, our archangel Michael will arise and deliver us home to heaven—body and soul complete. "*Lord, let at last Thine angels come!*" Until then, we live in the assurance of faith. We live by trusting, not in what we see, ***but in what we hear.*** We trust in God's Word that declares victoriously, "*It is finished.*" We trust and hold fast to His promise that He is with us always, even to the end of the age. We trust and hold fast to His promise that He has put His name

on us and made us His own, scribing His name upon our heads and hearts, and scribing our names in His Book of Life. We trust in His promise that every time we partake of this holy supper, He is here—*with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven gathered around Him in festal, holy joy*—feeding us and nourishing us with His victorious Body and Blood. Recognizing this (in faith), how can you not want to join your voice with them?! “*Holy, holy, holy; Lord God of Sabaoth (hosts/angelic armies)! Heaven and earth are full of your glory! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna!*”

I can think of no better way to end than with that; with the focus all on Christ. Rejoice, O heavens and all you who dwell in them! Rejoice, O my fellow brothers and sisters, for Christ dwells and abides with us, and His angels ever encompass us and shield us with His love and peace.

Give thanks unto the Lord, especially for all His behind the scenes love/care for us. Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy, His love, and His peace endures forever.

**AMEN**