

"Angels in White"

Russell Elliott

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"Seeth two angels in white" (John 20:12).

Care may press very heavily upon some because of a sense of failure in a trying and responsible post. Or there may be some secret in your life you cannot communicate to anyone — the skeleton in the cupboard. Or some great disappointment has befallen you, and you are inclined to let these blighted hopes darken the remainder of your own life and that of others. It may be you are suffering from the sin and disgrace of those near and dear to you, and truly this brings enough care to weigh down the stoutest heart. Care will often arise, too, from the thought of what might have been. This reflection will sometimes cause the bitterest pang. Let it be said at once that all regrets of this kind are useless. In many such cases it is impossible to tell what might have been the issue, even if a different course had been adopted, and even if you could tell, yet, being done, you cannot alter it. Our advice is, Get forgiveness from God or man, or both, if necessary, and make the best use of present opportunities.

Act, act in the living present,
Heart within, and God o'erhead.

Forgetting the things that are behind, reach forth unto those things that are before and press toward the mark.

Some people are always worrying as to whether they have done the right thing. As soon as they have acted, they begin to wish they had acted differently. Such people require to learn that it perhaps does not matter so very much after all. Let us learn to leave things with God. He can make them fit in in a wonderful way, and He makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

There is the care, too, that arises from persecution, from opposition, or from being misunderstood. The anxiety this brings is known only to those who have passed through the ordeal. The injustice, apart from every other consideration, is sufficiently galling, and when, as is almost invariably the case, your efforts to put things right only increase your difficulties, the situation becomes well-nigh unbearable. But if you are persuaded of the justness of your cause and that God is on your side, you may safely leave your character, as well as your comfort, in His hands. He will use all to teach you many a needed lesson, to fit you for nobler ends, and at last "will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday."

Whatever your care, remember there is one all-sufficient remedy. It is found, as we have tried to show, in first of all obeying the injunction, "Be careful for nothing," and then accepting in their full meaning those blessed words, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." Instead of being careful, we are to rejoice in the Lord, because He has control of every matter. All power is in His hands. "Be not afraid." Twice the Lord Jesus uttered these reassuring words to His disciples and under very different circumstances: once when they were in a ship on the sea "tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary," and once when three of His disciples were with Him on the mount surrounded by the glories of the transfiguration. What a wide field is covered by these two events! The one has to do with everything that is around you, the other with everything that is above you. Are you tossed on life's tempestuous sea, experiencing how much there is contrary to you? Jesus says, "Be not afraid." Is it a question of the coming glories and your fitness for them? The same voice utters the same words. You may feel that while you have become accustomed to this scene, with its

troubles and trials, you are very unaccustomed to such a scene as that on Mount Tabor. But notice, the Lord Jesus was as much at home in the one as in the other, and He would make us at home. What a wondrous Person the Saviour is! He can make us feel at ease amid divine glories, and equally at ease amid all the circumstances of the path that leads to them. "Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." If but we see Him, care will vanish. He is enough for us as to things temporal and enough for us as to things eternal (see Matthew 14 and 17).

We may well be happy with such a One to care for us. "He careth for you." Again we ask: Have you realized that the order which was given about the man in the inn (Luke 10) — "Take care of him" — has been given about you? Let us wake up to the fact that we have Someone to care for us. Why is a babe so happy though so helpless? Because it is the best-cared-for person in the house. Its cry brings immediate aid; its wants are always attended to. Would that we were content to be the Creator's babes! Are we anything more in the presence of the vast universe that stretches all around us and of Him who made it? Are there no arms to enfold, no hands to uplift, no bosom to shelter us? Thank God, there are for all those who become as little children.

It will assist us to rise above all our care if we are looking in the right direction. We catch the impress of what we behold. "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." During some very costly wars in which England was engaged more than a hundred years ago, it is said that while the then Prime Minister was always elated, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the contrary, was always depressed. The former looked only at the trophies of the war, the latter only at the expense.

Where are we looking? and what do we look for? Upon the answer to these two questions very much of our happiness depends. We often look for that which is bound to bring us disappointment, but if we look as Scripture directs us, we shall be more than satisfied. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time ... unto salvation." "Looking for that blessed hope." "From whence also we look for the Saviour" (Heb 9:28; Titus 2:13; Phil 3:20). We wrong both God and ourselves by being anxious, in four ways at least.

1. The cares of this life choke the Word, and we become unfruitful.
2. They rob us of the peace and happiness we should otherwise enjoy.
3. The effect upon others is bad, and we lose opportunities of being useful, for how can we speak to others of God's goodness unless we ourselves are in the conscious enjoyment of it?
4. It casts a reflection upon the character and ways of God.

Whenever, then, we are tempted to despond, let us repeat to ourselves those consoling words of the psalmist: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

And yet, though we have written so much, there are some who will put down the book resolved to hug their care as much as ever. Your case is so different from that of anyone else. It is so unique and exceptional that even God cannot meet it. Dare you turn to Him and tell Him so? Rather, see whether it is not some secret pride that leads you to carry your care, in order that you may draw attention to yourself.

Ah, how you mistake God, and what blessing you are losing! If only you would accept all that has come upon you as from Him and see that He can turn it all to good account! Over many a

life God sits as a weaver at the loom. All the threads seem so tangled and to move in opposite directions, but they are all moving according to His will, because all the threads are in His hand, and He is working out a wondrous pattern. In Persia, we are told, some carpets take a hundred years to make, and they are worked in the dark so that the colors may not be affected by the light. Is not this how God works? He brings us into the dark, blotting out sometimes the very light of our earthly life or bringing black clouds across the sky. But it all has a purpose.

"The other day a gentleman was asked by an artist friend to come and see a painting just finished. Much to his surprise, he was shown into a dark room and left there. After about fifteen minutes his friend came and took him up to the studio to see the picture, which was greatly admired. Before he left, the artist said, 'I suppose you thought it odd to be left in that dark room so long?' 'Yes,' the visitor said, 'I did.' 'Well,' his friend replied, 'I knew that if you came into my studio with the glare of the street in your eyes, you could not appreciate the fine coloring of the picture, so I left you in the dark room until the glare had worn out of your eyes.'" And God leaves us in many a dark room here below, but it is only a preparation for what is coming. One day we shall be invited "upstairs," and we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face. In the meantime, let us wait and trust.

While we do so, we may shed many tears, perhaps, but of these we need not be ashamed. Tears are the prisms into which the light of heaven often shines and becomes broken up that we may see its beauty. Mary Magdalene saw more through her tears than either of the apostles Peter and John. They went to the sepulchre, but went home again with no angelic vision. "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." That is what Mary saw — angels in white. Before her was the dark tomb, emptied of all she loved best, but it was just there the "angels in white" appeared. And they are always to be seen, if only we have eyes to see them — "angels in white," filling the darkest place on earth — the sepulchre — "angels in white" where all seems most dead and desolate. Have you a grave beside which you weep, the burial-place of some loved one, or where some fond ambition or desire lies entombed? Try to see the "angels in white." They are there, always there, if only we look for them. And your very cares may become "angels" leading you nearer to the risen Lord.

But you must be seeking Jesus, and if you see the "angels in white," your Lord will not be far off. The moment Mary had answered their question, "she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing," and one word from Him changed all her sorrow into joy.

What do these "angels in white" say to us? What they said to Mary: "Why weepest thou?" They bid us dry our tears. They tell us that hope is not dead, that victory is secured. The angels we refer to were sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. At either end of the mercy-seat that rested upon the ark, of old, there was a cherubim — so at either end of the sepulchre, here, there is an angel. The true ark of the covenant had passed through the waters of death, and the glorious resurrection morning had dawned. The "angels in white" put to us the question, "Why weepest thou?" and they may well do so. They tell us that for the believer judgment has been borne, the sting of death has been taken away, and the One who has done all this for us is alive again and calls us His brethren, and we can call His God our God and His Father our Father.

If we see that the cares of this life may become celestial benedictions, will they not sit more lightly upon us? The foundations of the New Jerusalem are garnished with all manner of precious stones. As precious stones have become purified by the pangs and throes of earth, may they not represent God's answers to all the sorrows felt by His people on the homeward

journey? The sorrows of earth will become the gems of glory. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Every suffering that Christian martyrs ever bore, every sorrow rightly felt by saints of God, under the hand of their Father, is helping to produce those stones that shall ere long flash in the light of the Lord God Almighty.

If we have to shed tears now, there is a time coming when they will all be wiped away. It is said that God will do this. Will you have any to be removed by such a hand? Do not think it hard that you have to shed them now. Think of what it will be for God to wipe them away! An aged Christian once wrote, "If I had not been called to pass through this trouble and shed these tears, I should have missed the softness of the hand that wiped them away." God has numbered the hairs of our head, and He, and no other, will wipe away our tears. Oh, the gladness of that moment, for when God has wiped them away, they will never come again! Our sins are gone forever, because He has put them away, and our tears will go too, someday, for the same reason, never to return.

Need we then be careful and troubled about many things when there is a God who bids us cast our care upon Him and tells us that He cares for us? Let us trust Him. There is a time coming when every riddle will be solved, when infidelity shall forever be a nightmare of the past, and faith shall reach its pinnacle of triumph, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord and become one vast temple to His praise, and then the one universal note of adoring worship upon every lip will surely be this: "As for God, His way is perfect."

O Lord, how happy should we be,
If we could cast each care on Thee,
If we from self could rest,
And feel at heart that One above,
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best.

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