

98-05-01b

Okay, we're back now from our break, and I will warn you ahead of time that we're going to be looking at a lot of scriptures, so if you are interested in making note of these, you will have to write quickly. We spent some time in the first session, and again, maybe I am hypersensitive about this, but there has been so much misunderstanding and misinformation about angels that any time you go to the study of them, it tends to be sort of a weird thing instead of a sound scriptural concept, and so I have tried to lay a background and remind us of the frame of reference in which we need to view this subject. The reason scripture tells us about angels is primarily, it is a reminder to us that our lives are important, our lives are being observed, and the decisions we make, we think, well, it's just little old me, I'm a nobody, the plan of God is moving with shakers and movers and people on TV and authors of books and stuff, and I'm just a little old believer in a backwater somewhere, nobody's paying attention.

Wrong, wrong, wrong. Your life counts. Every decision you make has a bearing and has the potential to reflect the glory of God or to fail that potential.

Every decision, every action, every thought, that's why Paul says we need to take every thought captive for Christ. Every thought. Think about your thoughts.

Grocery lists, do I wash the car or mow the lawn? How am I going to dress? How am I going to dress my children? What am I going to do today, tomorrow? How am I going to operate in my job? What am I going to do in this relationship? What am I going to do with this opportunity? Geographical decisions, policy decisions, every thought counts. The angels are watching because they're learning about God by watching us. It makes a difference.

It's such a sad thing. I cannot tell you how depressing it is to me to spend time with believers when as a group and as a whole, we as believers are so disinterested in the things of God. We're so apathetic.

We are totally caught up in the world. We're caught up in how our lives are turning out and whether we are satisfied or we are happy or we are achieving our goals. I cannot tell you.

I almost wish I didn't work in a Christian organization sometimes because you rub elbows with believers who don't have a clue and who do not have a care. We have this expression when you say goodbye to somebody, you say take care or have a care, be careful. We need to be careful.

We need to care about who we are and why we're here. This life, God has gone to extraordinary lengths to create us and give us an environment and give us free will. Put us in situations.

He picked the time and the place and the circumstances of our birth. He chose in eternity past the exact circumstances that we would face each and every day. He knows all about it.

He has set it up. It's like a little obstacle course that He wants us to make it all the way through. And it has a purpose.

It demonstrates points. It counts. It matters.

And we just forget that all the time. But that's why we're taking a look at angels. When we think about angels, it isn't to get a thrill.

It's to remind ourselves that there is an audience. We are surrounded by a great company of witnesses in the heavenly realms. We are writing a record that cannot be unwritten every day of our lives.

And it matters. Don't think that you're off in a little corner of the closet somewhere and God doesn't really care. God is intensely interested in every thought.

We will give an account for every thought and every word. You think, well, that's going to take some time. But that's what the Scripture says.

And we're reminded of that when we think about the angels. When you think about angels, just remember this. Your life counts.

My life counts. It matters. It's just as important as Moses.

It's just as important as the Apostle Paul. God didn't go to all the trouble to breathe life into us and give us an eternal human soul, thinking, well, I've just got some leftover energy here. I'll make a whole crowd of people I don't really care about.

It's not true. It matters. And we need to realize and have a care like God does.

With that said, we have already seen in Ephesians 3.10 that angels are learning the manifold wisdom of God by observing the church. It's specifically our age now that they are interested in. They had an active role in some of the history past.

We've seen angels coming down and visiting with men. You have the Scripture where we're encouraged to be hospitable. It says that some have entertained angels unawares.

We don't know to what extent angels still come down and walk around in human society. I think it is far more rare today than it was perhaps in Old Testament times, although you can count on the fingers of both hands the number of times that angels came down and walked among men, even in the Old Testament. But they are learning about God as they observe human history.

In 1 Peter 1.12, which is where we were when we took our break, we were working our way forward. Peter is talking about the importance of our lives, the importance of our faith. The value of our faith is more valuable than gold, refined gold that's tested in the fire.

We left off talking about the prophets who were looking ahead and writing things down in the Old Testament for our benefit. It was revealed to them that they were writing these things down for future generations. It was revealed that not to themselves but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

And these are things which angels desire to look into. The gospel that affects our daily life, the gospel of our daily deliverance, of the grace of God ministered to us from sunrise to sunrise, is something that the angels long to look into. They are the television audience for the situations of our lives.

And you would think, well, there are just a few scattered references to this. There are many such references. Turn back again to Ephesians chapter 6. Ephesians 6.10, Finally, my brethren, and this is after, if you can remember, all of the wonderful themes that are introduced in the first five and a half chapters of Ephesians.

The walking in love. The things that Paul prays that believers in the church will come to understand. The height and depth and length and breadth.

He says, finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. So, the devil, as a fallen angel, Satan, is interested in tripping us and causing us to fall.

Why? Does he just delight in messing up our lives? This is a thing you hear in conversation, again, amongst ill-informed and ill-advised believers. Well, this bad circumstance came into my life, and it's Satan. I encountered Satanic opposition.

The vast majority of us as believers don't have a clue as to why Satan may or may not be doing something in our lives. Most of us have not arrived at the place of having enough impact in the plan of God for Satan to pay any attention to us. But we assume that anything that doesn't go our way is Satanic opposition.

That when circumstances don't work out, we really wanted a certain thing to happen. We really wanted a certain outcome, and it didn't happen well. Well, Satan got in and messed that up.

We are so egotistical. We are so self-centered and so misguided and misinformed. Satan only is interested in us as an avenue to oppose God.

His beef is with God. His desire is to thwart the plan of God. His only interest in us is as

we have an effect or have a role in the plan of God.

And most of us, most of the people you hear talking about, well, you know, the devil did this and Satan hindered me and this, that and the other, are not in that category. The very fact that they would say such a thing is evidence that it cannot possibly be true. The only time that we will encounter genuine Satanic opposition is when we are pursuing a genuinely godly life and a genuinely godly course that reflects the glory of God and furthers the plan of God.

And along with that, we will have those resources from God to stand. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

You wouldn't know it to listen to prayer requests. You wouldn't know it to listen to the conversation of believers. You would think that our entire business is with flesh and blood, or as it says in the Greek, blood and flesh.

That it's all about circumstances, it's all about impact, it's all about making a difference in the world. It's all about getting something accomplished, furthering a ministry, making something happen, keeping something from happening, picketing, marching, demonstrating, writing, having an influence, making a difference. And it's not.

The conflict is between Satan and God. The conflict is spiritual, and the warfare is spiritual, and the victories are won in the spiritual realm. There are effects and there are manifestations in the physical realm, but you don't win a spiritual victory by fighting a fleshly battle.

You do not reflect the eternal glory of God in what you do. It's what you think. It's what you trust.

It's taking thoughts captive for Christ. That's where the battle is won or lost. And it's our perspective.

They have this thing somewhere on TV, the short attention span theater, where they show these little short things for people to watch, because people who don't have a very long attention span can't make it through an hour and a half of a movie, or two hour movies. They have a short attention span theater, and they show these little short things. Sort of like Nick at Night.

About half an hour is as much as anybody can take of one thing. Well, we as believers have a short attention span. We have trouble remembering or caring about who we are and why we're here.

Well, we need to pay attention, because we are wrestling. We are engaged in a conflict, whether we know it or not. Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against

powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies, in the unseen realms.

That's why we're here. Our visible life. That's the whole nature of faith.

If you could see Satan, if he was last reported to be in South Georgia, like what's his name with the fiddle song, the devil went down to Georgia, and which one could play the hottest fiddle, and that kind of thing. Well, if everything was in the physical realm, they'd have TV cameras down there. Well, here's Satan, and he's busy persecuting this guy with a fiddle down here.

Or he's off in the Middle East with Saddam Hussein, or he's down there in Uganda with Idi Amin, or he's over in Afghanistan, or he's up in Canada, or he's in Washington, D.C., working his wiles. But it's not a fleshly battle, and so he's not here. Well, where is he? He's in the heavenlies.

He's in the unseen realms. That's where our warfare is. And Paul says in verse 13 of Ephesians 6, Therefore, when we start thinking about unseen things, principalities, powers, rulers of wickedness in high places and all this, therefore, as a result of that, we should draw a conclusion and take an action.

Take up the whole armor of God. That would be pretty silly. You don't see them issuing stuff at boot camp, or you jump off the truck and getting ready to go into war, and they hand you just a helmet.

And they say, OK, here's your helmet. Charge on in. You need the whole set of gear.

In the Marine Corps, you need all of your 782 gear, or whatever they call it now. You need not only your helmet, but you need your deuce gear. You need your canteens.

You need your ammunition pouches. You need your first aid kit. You need your weapon and the little cleaning kit that's in the butt of the weapon.

You need your flak jackets. You need your boots. You need all of your stuff.

You don't go running in there and say, Oh, gosh, you know, I left my flak jacket back there on the transport. It's nuts. Nobody would run into battle and half of them left their helmets back on the truck.

Oh, you know, I just wasn't thinking. What was I thinking? But we do that daily as believers. We go off completely unprepared without our helmet, without our shield, or our flak jacket.

You know, it talks about the breastplate of righteousness. Well, in modern day, we don't wear a breastplate. We wear a flak jacket.

Bullets bounce off. The fiery darts of the wicked one, in this case, bounce off. But it's righteousness.

Well, do we have any righteousness? Do we come into the game with righteousness? We don't. Well, where do we get that righteousness that protects us from the darts of the wicked one? We get it the same place David got it, by going to God and asking for cleansing. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

It doesn't mean that we never get dirty. It means that God is a perfect cleanser. God can erase every trace of iniquity, every trace of sin.

David says in the Psalms, I stand before God in my righteousness. He's writing this after murdering a guy, after committing adultery, after mis-raising his children, after making horrendous mistakes in many different categories. He says, I stand before God in my integrity and in my righteousness.

Why? Because he knows how to put on the breastplate of righteousness. He gets it from God. He goes to God and says, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. You know how you get purged with hyssop? Hyssop is what you lash to the cedar handle with the red string and dip in the blood. And you sprinkle blood with the hyssop.

And that's how you are made clean. You can go over to Hebrews chapter 10 where that application is made to us in the church age. Come before God.

Come into his presence with your bodies washed with pure water and your heart having been sprinkled from an evil conscience. How do we get rid of an evil conscience? How do we get rid of the effects and the presence of evil? We go to God. Acknowledge our transgressions and our sins.

And he's faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse. But the reason for putting this on is not just so we can be happy. Oh, I was carrying around a big load of guilt and care and now I've gone and confessed my sins and now I'm free of all that and I feel happy again.

And the whole purpose of God has been accomplished. We are so short-sighted. Why are we cleansed? Why does God equip us? Why does God give us all of these things and cause us to stand firm? Because we are engaged in a conflict.

We have the opportunity to further his purpose and reflect his glory. We are wrestling in the conflict on the side of God against these unseen forces. They are interested in us.

There's nothing they would like more than to cause us to be distracted, cause us to believe the lie dressed up as a doctrine of the Bible, which most of Christianity is now doing. You look at all of your 435 different denominations in America alone. Not all 435

can be right.

There are probably at least 434 that are wrong. And all of the people in all of those churches Sunday after Sunday are being led down the wide road and the broad gate that leads to destruction. And there's nobody happier about it than Satan.

Because believers have been neutralized. They don't have their armor on. They don't have any idea of the conflict or the goal or what's at stake.

It's what Jesus Christ died for. Not just to keep us from going to the lake of fire, but to deliver us out of this present evil age and the rulers thereof. That's what we're told in Ephesians chapter 6. Their desire is to separate us from the love of God.

To distract us and deflect us from experiencing the benefits of the love of God. Look at Romans 8.38. Paul says in verse 35 of Romans 8, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, for your sake we are killed all day long. As believers, we don't like coming to passages like this.

Do we have this orientation? I am willing to be killed all day long for the sake of the Lord. We want our Christianity to bless us and prosper us and give us happiness and peace and prosperity. We're not interested in persevering under trial.

We're not interested in concentrating under pressure and working through difficulties. It doesn't give us any joy. It doesn't give us any sense of challenge or any sense of opportunity.

We look at difficulties and we just get depressed and we get tired and we say, When will this end? Why is that? Because we don't think. We don't link our lives to God's eternal purposes and realize that this may be... There can be a stadium of angels watching to see what we're going to decide. And all we can think about is, Oh gosh, I am so depressed.

This is the same situation I've been facing for weeks, for months, for years. And it's just not getting any better. Woe is me.

Other people don't have this problem. Why me? Why couldn't I be like that person over there? And we get so self-centered and so distracted. And yet, having no concept, no idea that this could be the tiebreaker in an issue between God and His creation.

And He's going to have to turn to someone else to demonstrate that point because we don't have a clue as to what's going on. Do we have this attitude? For your sake we are killed all day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Jesus did. Jesus did not want to go to the cross, but Jesus understood the issue better

than anyone else. But look at what He says in verse 37.

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. If we ever get a grip on that perspective and realize that in these things that we think are so terrible and so depressing that this is where the victory is. We have an opportunity that other people don't have.

We have a place for the grace of God to express itself that other people don't have. It ought to be exciting. We ought to have the perspective that Paul has.

We are more than conquerors. We're better than Alexander the Great. We're better than the pharaohs of Egypt.

We're better than Napoleon. There is a victory to be won at that particular spot in our lives if we just recognize it and seize and lay hold of the things of God. I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You notice in that list of things that you have angels mentioned. Death and life, angels, principalities, powers, all of these are things beyond the realm of this mortal life. And there are believers, there are many of us, who let these things separate us from the love of God.

We forget it. We lose sight of it. We lose confidence in it.

We lose hope in it. And in so doing, we cut ourselves off from this grand opportunity we have of living in this age. But you will notice angels, principalities, and powers cannot prevail against the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

They cannot defeat us. We give away the victory when we fail to think, when we fail to realize who we are and why we're here. And the reason that we have that victory in Christ Jesus, like it says in Romans 8.39, that love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord and the victory that pertains thereto, is because Jesus Christ is above these things.

He created them. Look at Colossians 1.16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. Who is the Him in that verse? Who is it that created all these things? It's the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation it tells us in verse 15. Jesus Christ is in view. And by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

Those four categories all refer to angels. All things were created through Him and for

Him. He is before all things and in Him all things consist.

And it gives us a perspective on who our Savior is. And Jesus has the head of the body. When we realize how high He is in the order of things and that we have the privilege and the honor of being His body and His bride, it reminds us that like the younger brother, so many cases in the Bible, that ironic reversal where the elder serves the younger, where the last becomes the first.

Man is created lower than the angels, but yet he is crowned with glory and honor. God, as it were, reaches past the angels down to this lower form of life, mankind, and raises us up with Christ and seats us on His throne, from far above all of these heavenly creatures. We have a wonderful standing in Christ, and we have no right to feel inferior.

We have no right to feel small or insignificant. We are in union with Christ, who created the highest things that anyone can imagine. And we are higher than all those things because we are united with Him.

We were important enough to God to be so united. And we do not have the right to denigrate the work of God and say, well, I am small, I am insignificant, I do not really count, I am a failure, etc., etc. We stand because Christ stands, and Christ stands at the top of the pyramid, and we are right there with Him.

Another thing we are reminded of is we think about the angels. Christ created them. He also, as a man, ascended above them.

Look at Ephesians 4, verse 10. He who descended, that is the Lord Jesus, is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things. And in accomplishing His work of salvation among us, He not only is head over all things to the church, but He fills all things in the universe.

And when He ascends up above the heavens, He ascends above every angel, above every created thing, and stands above them. So as a man, as the incarnate Christ, Jesus ascends above all the heavens. They are subject to Him.

If you look at 1 Peter 3, verse 22, Peter says that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. And the idea there is not that as the second person of the Trinity and the Son of God they are subject, but Jesus Christ as a human being, as a man, as the God-man has ascended above them and they have been made subject to Him. It's one of the reasons you have that theme throughout the Scriptures of the elder serving the younger.

The angels are going to be subject to us. We will judge angels. We saw that Scripture last time.

So Jesus created the principalities and powers, the angels. He, as a man, has ascended above them. They are now subject to Him.

And the disobedient ones have been disarmed by Him. Look at Colossians 2, verse 15. Once again, this is the incarnate Christ that accomplishes this.

Paul talks here about us having been made alive together with Him in verse 13 of Colossians 2, having forgiven you all trespasses. We tend to think that there are a few trespasses that didn't get forgiven, but Paul says they've all been forgiven, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

That's about as final as you can get. Having disarmed principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. When Jesus Christ wiped out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, when Jesus Christ resolved the issue of our sin and our sinfulness and took the whole problem and nailed it to His cross, He triumphed over the principalities and powers.

He made a public spectacle. You have to ask yourself, well, did anybody on earth see this public spectacle? I don't think so. So where was the public that observed this public spectacle? It's in heaven.

The triumph of Jesus Christ in securing our salvation was a spectacle that defeated principalities and powers and was viewed by them. It's the central issue in their observation. It's one of the big reasons.

And even our salvation, we tend to think, well, my salvation only revolves around me. I'm saved. I won't go to the lake of fire.

God had a purpose in saving us. We are bought with a price. We are to glorify God in our lives, in our bodies, because we are a part of His plan.

His plan revolves around Him. So they have been disarmed by Christ. They are judged by Christ.

Look at John 16.11. John 16.11 When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, of sin because they do not believe in Me, of righteousness because I go to My Father and you see Me no more, of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. The ruler of this world stands judged, stands condemned. We know who the ruler of this world is.

It's Satan. And he has been judged. The work of Jesus Christ, having been accomplished, that's when the Comforter comes and the ruler of this world, after the cross, stands condemned.

Something about the work that Christ accomplished on the cross in securing our salvation sealed the judgment of Satan and all those who follow him. And he, from that time forward, stands condemned. The life that we live as unbelievers, people who have not come to faith in Christ, who have not come to relationship with God through Christ, remain under the power of this defeated ruler of the world.

You can look, for example, in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 2. You He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. What an odd thing for Paul to introduce when he's talking to this audience. And he says, God has given you new life in Christ when you were formerly dead in your trespasses and sins.

And then he says that you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. Why doesn't he just say you were in Satan's grip? But he says the prince of the power of the air. It's a reminder, if Satan is a prince, there's more than just him.

Prince of the power of the air. These are all of the unseen forces of darkness of which he is the ruler. The spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

Is there active involvement in human history on the part of the fallen angels under Satan? Yes, there is. They are actively at work in the sons of disobedience. That's what Paul says.

Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath just as the others. And what a tragic thing that as believers, having been delivered out of this cesspool of earthly desire and short-sightedness, we fall back into it. We, like a dog, return to the vomit.

And having been delivered and disentangled from this world, we return to it. We saw that passage in Peter last time. Can't leave Ephesians 2 without reading verse 4. God, who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. And raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the ages to come, he might demonstrate the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

He's going to do this in the ages to come. How many ages are there to come? Well, there's the millennial age and there's the eternal future. What Christ has done for us will be a memorial that extends throughout eternity.

In the ages to come, God will say, Look at human history. Look at what the Lord Jesus Christ did. And look at those who trusted in him and the fruit of their lives that reflects

divine glory.

Our lives make a difference. This same idea is found in Colossians 1.13. A few pages over. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

Do you start to see a theme cropping up in these passages? Whenever you see deliverance out of darkness into the light, deliverance from the powers of the prince of the power of the air and so forth, you, in the context, almost always find references to God's love. It's an expression of God's love. This seems to be an issue in the angelic conflict, in the angelic case that is being made and demonstrated in human history.

There seems to be an issue raised about God's love because constantly we have references to the love of God manifested in our salvation as we are delivered from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his love. Jesus here is presented as the ultimate expression of God's love in delivering us out of the power of darkness, out of the power of Satan. As we think about the essence of God, the character of God and so forth, we do not want to overlook the centrality and the pervasive nature of God's love.

God's justice, God's righteousness, God's truth are all shot through with God's love. It is a powerful reminder to us that we are his children. You also find this in Acts 26.18. We don't often get to make theological points out of Acts, but in Acts 26.18 we do have such a passage.

This is in the words of the Lord Jesus to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. He says in Acts 26.15, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting, but rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. This, by the way, is one of the passages that I believe tells us that Saul of Tarsus was in fact a believer in the Old Testament sense, a misguided one concerning the things of Christ, but he had a great store of Old Testament knowledge.

And Jesus says, I will make you a minister and witness both of the things which you have seen up to this point in your Old Testament studies and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. And we know that Jesus Christ personally revealed a great deal of truth to Paul. We know that he was caught up to the third heaven and saw things that a man is not allowed to utter, that Jesus told him about the upper room, which he talks about in Corinthians, and so forth.

But look at the next few verses. I will deliver you from the people as well as from the Gentiles to whom I now send you, and here's the purpose, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. The purpose of their deliverance is not only to save them, but so that they will have an

inheritance.

This is our opportunity. If we're looking far enough ahead, if we are sustained by hope in the future and belief in the promises of God, we know that there is an inheritance that awaits those who live by faith in God day to day, who don't lose sight of that perspective. So, we are delivered at salvation out of the power of Satan into the kingdom of light.

There's a lot that we could say about Satan that we will have to save for another time. I will simply point out a few things about him. He is defeated when believers are obedient.

Take a look at Luke chapter 10. Our lives and our faith make a difference in the unseen realms. Jesus sends out the 70 in Luke 10.

The Lord appointed 70 others also and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to go. He said to them, The harvest is great. The laborers are few.

Pray, the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way. Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves.

He goes on to give them their instructions. Their message in verse 9 is to say, The kingdom of God has come near to you. He goes on to pronounce woe on some of the cities who have heard the word and have rejected it.

He tells them in verse 16, He who hears you, hears me. He who rejects you, rejects me. And he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me.

To express faith in Christ is to express faith in God, in God the Father. Jesus is the way to the Father. No man comes to the Father except through Christ.

But Christ is a way. He is not the ultimate destination. He is the way to relationship with the Father.

He makes that clear in John 14, 6. Verse 17, Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name. And what does Jesus say in verse 18? When they go and fulfill this commission, this calling that Jesus has given them to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and they exercise the authority that he has delegated to them, what happens? They return with joy. The demons are subject to us in your name.

He said to them, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. The obedience of believers, the faithfulness of believers to their calling is a crushing blow to Satan. He falls from heaven, as it were.

He says in verse 20, Even though they've been given the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, in verse 19, nothing shall

by any means hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this. This is the big abuse that you see in the media.

People making big noise about how they've got the demons bound and so forth. Jesus says don't rejoice that you have been given power over the enemy, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven. What does that mean? I'm saved and I know that I am? Our names are written in heaven.

Why? Because that's an eternal record. It's going to eternally reflect the glory of God. It is a Bible for the ages.

Our names are written in heaven. Our lives count. Our lives make a difference, not only in this age, but outside this age, in the heavenlies, and for all eternity.

We cannot take our lives lightly and we cannot afford to be distracted. We have to take our thoughts captive for Christ. It makes a difference what you think right now and what you think an hour from now and what you think tomorrow and the next day and the next.

It's all related to the plan and the purpose of God. We have been bought with a price and it matters. That's why God fills us in on details about the angels and details about the heavenlies and about eternal things, to fuel our hope and our perspective that we are in a position to make a big difference through the grace that God has granted to us.

So may God grant to us the alertness. You may recall the study we did quite a while back now called Watch and Pray. It went through all the passages in the Bible that talk about be alert.

We are not sons of the darkness that we should be asleep. We are sons of the day and we need to be awake and watchful. Watch and pray for you do not know at what hour the Son of Man comes, Jesus said to his generation.

We've got to wake up and remember minute by minute, day by day, who we are and why we're here. It's such a great opportunity and if we do wake up, even for a few moments, the rewards are so great and we will be so glad that we paid attention when the Holy Spirit called and when the ministry of God's Word in our souls identified for us these great opportunities and the great potential that we have through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let's close in prayer.

We thank you, Father, for the awesome privilege that you have granted to us to live in this age, to be in union with our Savior, Jesus Christ, to stand on the brink of eternity looking forward to his return and to the bright glory that will be revealed in his kingdom and in the eternity future. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will make these things real to us on a day-by-day, hour-by-hour basis and that we will be alert and watch and pray with our armor girded on and our eyes fixed firmly on the author and finisher of our faith. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.