

BUGGIN' OUT!

Newsletter

Applying Biblical Truth and Humor to the Struggle.

Touched by a Christian

Before reading this article, you need to know that I am a big fan of the show *Touched by an Angel*. For those of you who have never seen it, it stars Della Reese and Roma Downey. They portray two angels, Tess and Monica, who are sent to earth to deliver messages of God's love to men and women in crisis.

When I was a gay sex addict cruising through New York City seeking contact with men, in the deepest, most private sector of my heart, there lived a hope that wouldn't die...a hope that, one night, I would turn a corner while sinning in Brooklyn, and be greeted by Roma Downey in a glowing white bathrobe. She would smile like a poster child for Crest Whitening Strips, and inform me that she has come to deliver a personal message to me from God. The message would be communicated in a Scottish accent and go something like this:

*Robert, I am here to tell you that God knows about
all the men you are having sex with, about your anxiety over
HIV, and about the loneliness in your heart and He
wants you to know that you are important to Him
and that He loves you very, very much.*

At this point, I am a wailing idiot on my knees, unable to join a verb to a noun to say something. The snot dripping from my nose seems unimportant to Roma and she continues:

Robert, don't be afraid. Wipe your nose and listen up. You are precious to God and He wants to restore the life that Satan has stolen from you.

*I have been assigned to stay with you and to teach you to
live again. I will not leave until you can again*

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stand on your own.

I would have given anything for this to have actually happened but it never did. No bright light. No message from God. No Roma Downey. Just out-of-control me, lost in the night, searching for anything to take the place of God's love, which I believed was unavailable to me.

Maybe I had misinterpreted Psalm 91:11:

For He orders His angels to protect you wherever you go.

Or perhaps I was viewing too much PAX Television, but I had hoped for more help from the angels than I got.

That God never sent an angel to help me developed steadily into hopelessness, and confirmed my fears that I had strayed too far and had enjoyed too much sex, causing God to simply lose interest in loving me.

Then I saw it at Barnes & Noble. It was a book about angels written by Billy Graham. I have always said that if you can't trust Billy Graham who can you trust? I bought the book.

Billy taught me some things about angels that, while likely obvious to most Christians, had eluded me.

- Angels are created beings
- God created a limited number of angels
- Angels don't procreate
- Angels can be in only one place at a time (they are not omnipresent)

It seems just mathematically sound that mankind would eventually outnumber angels, making it impossible for angels to reach out to every single person in distress and communicate God's love to them.

Then, one evening while reading my Bible, I came across Luke 17:11-16, which reads:

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As Jesus continued toward Jerusalem, He reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. As He entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a

distance, crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests."

And as they went, their leprosy disappeared.

One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus,

shouting, "Praise God, I'm healed!" He fell face down on the

ground at Jesus' feet, thanking Him for what He had done.

This man was a Samaritan.

When Jesus went into the village and healed the ten lepers, it had never occurred to me, until my pastor mentioned it in a sermon, that there had to have been many lepers there that day...why did Jesus heal only ten?

A bell went off for me. Jesus left the other lepers in our hands. We may not be able to heal leprosy or AIDS or cancer...but I don't believe that the physical healing is what made the healed leper return to Jesus and give thanks to God. I believe the leper's newfound joy was having Jesus single him out among many and, through an act of healing, communicate to him that the Living God knew him and loved him. When a man is unreservedly convinced that God loves him, nothing else matters.

Jesus' gift to the leper was not the physical healing...the physical healing was merely the vehicle through which the greater and life-changing gift of God's love was communicated. The physical healing died with the man...the message of God's love was what defined eternity.

My friend Kevin makes fun of me for always watching my DVDs of *Touched by an Angel*. He thinks it's silly. He cannot understand why an angel needs to drive around in a red Cadillac. But I don't care. I can't watch it without my throat hurting. I love the scenes where the alcoholic, the prostitute, the work-a-holic, the orphan, or the man about to take his own

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life, receives a visit from the angel Monica, with a message that God loves him. Their lives and hearts are never the same again.

God gave the responsibility of communicating His message of love for mankind first to the angels and the prophets, then to Jesus, then to His disciples and, finally to you and to me.

Touched by Jesus through an act of physical healing, touched by an angel through a personal message from God, or touched by a Christian through a deliberate act of love when no one else cared...any which way, the Kingdom of Heaven scores and a life is forever changed.

I consistently underestimated the power of the Cross when I was a gay tramp. I never really grasped all the hype about it, but now I do: the Cross makes me eligible to play on Heaven's Team.

I remember a line from *Touched by an Angel* where Monica says "We angels don't need faith, we interact daily with God"; and this can be our story too. Our mission, should we decide to accept it, is to communicate God's love. Our reward is that we, like the angels, get to move beyond faith in God, to first-hand knowledge of His love for us. It is by communicating the message to others that it becomes alive and trusted in our own hearts.

People recognize heavenly love when they see it. And when we position ourselves as Heaven's messengers, showing up at the right place and at the right time, bringing to them the same message of God's love when they most need it, they may ask, with a flicker of suspicious hope in their voice, "Are you an angel?"

And, because of the Cross, we get the awesome privilege of responding, "No, I'm not an angel. But so many of my teammates indeed are. Come on...let me tell you all about it."

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