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DANIEL 10:13—11:1 A PROPHET'S REWARD

¹³ *But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. ¹⁴ Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come.*"

¹⁵ *While he was saying this to me, I bowed with my face toward the ground and was speechless.*

¹⁶ *Then one who looked like a man touched my lips, and I opened my mouth and began to speak. I said to the one standing before me, "I am overcome with anguish because of the vision, my lord, and I am helpless. ¹⁷ How can I, your servant, talk with you, my lord? My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe."*

¹⁸ *Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. ¹⁹ "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed," he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong."*

When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak, my lord, since you have given me strength."

²⁰ *So he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I go, the prince of Greece will come; ²¹ but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. ^{11:1} And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I took my stand to support and protect him.)"*

Daniel's vision shifts back from an appearance of God to that of the angel (perhaps Gabriel). The angel ministers to the Prophet by strengthening him for the content that is to follow. Again this empowerment is the power of God, this time being mediated through the touch of the angel. It is personal and intimate. Daniel is not "zapped" but touched, and with the imperative not to be afraid, he is also given God's peace. The Prophet, who is loved by God, has remained absolutely faithful to God throughout the time of Israel's exile and as he approaches the end of his mortal life God is about to give him a vision of the Divine plan for Israel.

As a faithful participant in God's plan, Daniel is given a fuller view of reality. Although it seems a bit quaint to us in the 21st Century, it would have been no surprise to Daniel that there were powers and principalities at work in the spiritual realm that paralleled events in this world. We see evidence of this even later in the elaborate angelology of the Jews during the period between the Old and New Testaments, and in many of the so-called "New Age" religions of today. But the importance of the message is not to be found in the hierarchies of angels or identities of spiritual beings, but in the knowledge of our struggles having cosmic meaning. God loves his people so much that the whole cosmos is mobilized on their behalf.

What a great comfort to God's people to know that even while suffering evil and exile, God is working out his love for them and their salvation. We, too, can take assurance from God's vision to Daniel. We are not left alone in this world to find our own way and fight our own battles. Rather, God is with us and when we align ourselves with God, his angels are fighting our behalf. However, the history of Israel serves to remind us that

the broad sword of God can be wielded in two ways. The sharp edge is used against the enemies of God, but God also uses the broad side of the sword to chastise his disobedient children. Either way, it is the sword of justice and love.

Thank you, Father for the glimpse of the spiritual working out of your will in the world. Continue to encourage me in my walk with you and correct me when I wander off according to my own way. Help me to resist getting caught up in the details of angels and powers and principalities, but to maintain my focus on you and the promises and provision you provide. Empower my faith so I might be faithful. Amen.