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“Confidence in Jesus and His Angels”

Text: Daniel 10:10-14; 12:1-3; Revelation 12:7-12; Matthew 18:1-11

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Things look bad. Your religion is shrinking. People are getting used to the culture around them and adapting to it. Your children are being educated by those who don't believe as you do. Folks don't know their Bible much anymore, and live by it even less. It's all slipping away. Things look bad. And the future? Well, it's hard to predict the future, but it's hard to imagine things getting any better. We're on the wrong trajectory, and picking up speed. How can you turn this thing around?

Well, Daniel saw all this, and he fasted and prayed.

You might remember Daniel's story - or at least part of it. He did not have an easy life. The Babylonians had conquered Judah in war. The part of the old nation of Israel still named Israel had been wiped out 150 years before. Then Babylon came in and finished the job. And most of the people were hauled off as prisoners of war. Now, Daniel was a smart young man at the time, and so was put into the re-education program - to educate him in the ways of the Babylonians, so he would be useful to them. And he was. He excelled. Which caused the natives - who weren't as smart or as able as him - to be jealous of him. So they plotted against him and got him thrown into the lion's den - that's the part of the story most people remember. God saved him from the mouths of the lions. But things hadn't gotten any better. In fact, things just seemed to get worse.

So as Daniel did when he got taken to Babylon, as he did when he was plotted against, and as he did even while in the lion's den, so he did now when things looked grim: he fasted and prayed. For 21 days. And from the first day, we are told, his prayers were heard. But there was a delay, caused by *the prince of the kingdom of Persia*. Not a man-prince, but the one who held the kingdom under his princely, demonic power - *satan*. For 21 days satan worked on Daniel. For 21 days he was allowed to torment him. For 21 days he tried to convince him his fasting and prayer were a waste of time. For 21 days, he lied and deceived and twisted words and tried to get convince Daniel to give up. But at the end of 21 days, the time appointed was up, and *Michael, the chief prince*, the chief angel, was unleashed to fight for Daniel. And Daniel was given relief. Michael fought off satan, and the Word of God then spoke to Daniel, and comforted him.

But note His message. It doesn't sound good at first. Yes, things look bleak - *but it's*

going to get worse. ***There shall be a time of trouble***, he says, ***such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But . . . at that time*** - when things look their absolute worst, at their lowest point - ***your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book***. Or in other words, this sinful world and its prince will rage, but only for a time. And they will not win. God's people shall be delivered. Shall. Fact. The outcome is not in doubt.

And so it came to pass. God's people were permitted to leave Persia and go back to Judah. God had decreed their captivity for 70 years, their discipline, and they stayed not a day less. And while it looked bleak and hopeless at times, the outcome was never in doubt. At least, not to God. The God who speaks and it happens. The God who orders His angels to act and fight, *and they do*.

But the ultimate fulfillment of these words to Daniel didn't happen for another several hundred years, when the Word of God didn't just come and speak to a Daniel - but when **the Word of God became flesh**. When Jesus was born. When the Son of God in human flesh, came to fight for you. Like Daniel, He too fasted and prayed - remember that? But Jesus not for 21 days, but 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness, being tempted and tormented by the same demonic prince that hounded Daniel. But for Jesus, no angel intervened. This was His fight. Angels came and ministered to Him afterward, but this was His fight.

And satan knew it. In the verses *right before* the verses we heard from Revelation, it says that *the dragon* - another apt description of satan - *tried to devour the male child* - Jesus - that had been born, but was not able. He tried to devour Jesus with death at His birth. He tried to devour Him with sin in the wilderness. He tried to devour Him with doubt on the cross. But He was not able. The Word of God made flesh for us, Jesus, won. He didn't lose when He died, but used death to conquer death; and to conquer sin and satan, too. His resurrection, our resurrection. His life, our life. And our freedom.

But, those verses from Revelation told us, that's not the end of the story. There's more, and bigger. Because the full and final fulfillment of those words is still to come - when Jesus comes again in glory. Until then, we heard, the demonic prince is going to fight here, for ***he has been thrown down to the earth***. Or in other words, *we weren't thrown to the lions, like Daniel - the lions were thrown down to us*. And he is going to fight against you, like he did with Daniel. Trying to devour you with sin, death, and doubt.

But like as with Daniel, God sends His angels to fight for you. You may not ever see them. You may not ever know. I don't know if Daniel knew during those 21 days what was going on - only after was he made aware.

But to you it has been revealed. You have been told. That you expect it and not be surprised. That you are a target. Because you have been baptized. And when you were baptized, you were marked with the name of the demonic prince's enemy, Jesus, and

your name was written in His book. So when satan sees you, he sees Jesus. When satan sees you, he seethes with rage and hate. And so he attacks. How? Different for each one of us. But for each one of us, the same goal - *get us to walk away from our Saviour.* Getting the culture around us - as in the time of Daniel - to educate us and seduce us into thinking that the danger isn't so great, that we let our guard down. Into thinking the Word of God maybe not so true, that the pleasures and priorities and opinions of this world good, even if the Word of God says they're not. Into thinking, *what's the harm?* And it looks bad, doesn't it? As it did in Daniel's day. Things aren't getting better, and seem to be picking up speed.

But it would be worse were the angels not fighting for you. You may not ever see them. You may not ever know. And I'm sure they're doing more fighting and protecting than we could ever know or imagine. Even for ***the little ones***, the littlest ones, as Matthew tells us. Their angels are always at the ready. For satan is an equal opportunity attacker. It doesn't matter who you are, how old you are, or how strong you are. You're in his crosshairs, everyone of you.

For a time. And when the days are up, the days that have been decreed, like with Daniel, the Word of God will come to us and, as we pray, *deliver us from evil.*

He is now, already, to be sure. The angels are fighting for you, protecting you. But this too: ***the blood of the Lamb and the Word of His testimony*** are delivering you, giving you the forgiveness you need and the Spirit you need. And just as with the Lord's promise to Daniel, the certainty and confidence that ***you shall be delivered.*** There are no "maybes" or "ifs" with God's promises! You ARE baptized. You ARE forgiven. This IS My Body and Blood. This IS the Word of the Lord. Sure. Certain. Powerful. Things may look bleak, but the Word of God is our light in the darkness, our confidence in doubt, and our anchor in the storm.

So here, the outcome is not in doubt. If you walk away from ***the blood of the Lord and the Word of His testimony***, if you go into the battle without this armor of God, then yeah, you're in danger. But know this: it would be better for you to chop off a hand or foot or gouge out an eye - or be thrown into a lion's den - than to deliver yourself over to evil. Than to leave these gifts of God and His angels behind.

Because with these gifts of God and His angels fighting for you, nothing can harm you. Really. Nothing. You may be hated, you may be thrown into a lion's den, you may be persecuted, you will have satan at you - but the victory is already yours. Nothing will not overcome you. For even if you die, or *when* you die, you will rise to life with Jesus. Satan, your accuser, will not have the last word, Jesus' forgiveness will. And with that forgiveness, you have everything. Life now, and life forever. Jesus promised, and so it is.

So if you look around at our world today, it looks a lot like it was in the days of Daniel. Things are slipping away, the world is on the wrong trajectory, and things are picking up

speed. It's easy to lose hope. So this Word of God for us today is timely. That there is more going on than meets the eye. That the angels are fighting for us. And that while there may be a time when the attack is fierce and brutal and long and all seems lost, it is not. It was not for Daniel, and it is not for us. Because Jesus, the promised one came, and is coming again. *With His angels*. And when He and His angels come, things change. They changed for Daniel, they changed in the first century, they change for us now, and in the end, they will change. When we will see what we now believe. We'll see the angels who have been protecting us and fighting for us. We'll hear them singing with us. And we'll rejoice with them - Saint Michael and all the rest - around the Lamb on His throne. Forever.

So fear not. You have Christ. You have His angels. You have the victory.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.