

Angels

Daniel 10:13, 21

From John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1843), Vol. II, 253-254, 265-266, emphasis added; English updated.

Daniel 10:13 “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.”

From this passage we may clearly deduce the following conclusion—**angels contend for the Church of God both generally and for single members**, just as their help may be needed. This we know to be a part of the occupation of angels, who protect the faithful according to Psalm 34 (Psalm 34:8). They fix their camp in a circuit round them.

God, therefore, plants His angels against all the endeavors of Satan, and all the fury of the impious who desire to destroy us, and are ever plotting for our complete ruin. If God were not to protect us in this way, we should be utterly undone. We are aware of Satan’s horrible hatred to us, and of the mighty fury with which he assails us; we know how skillfully and variously he contrives his artifices; we know him as the prince of this world, dragging and hurrying the greater part of mankind along with him, while they impiously pour forth their threats against us. What prevents Satan from daily absorbing a hundred times over the whole Church both collectively and individually? It clearly becomes necessary for God to oppose his fury, and this he does by angels. **While they are contending for us and for our safety**, we do not perceive this hidden malice, because they conceal it from us.

. . . The angel now informs us how Michael, one of the chief leaders, came up with the requisite supplies. The defense of one angel might have been sufficient, for angels have no further power than what is conferred upon them. But God is not bound to any particular means, He is not limited to either one or a thousand, as when Jehoshaphat speaks of a small army, he states, It matters not before God, whether we are few or many (2 Chronicles 14:11; 1 Samuel 14:6.) **For God can save His people by either a small force or a mighty one; and the same also is true of angels.** But God is anxious to testify to the care which He bestows upon the welfare of His people, and to His singular loving-kindness towards the Israelites displayed by the mission of a second angel. . . .

Daniel 10:21 “But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.”

He next adds, *There is no one who supports me in this duty except Michael, whom he calls prince of the elect people.* It is surprising why the angel and Michael alone fought for the safety of the people. It is written, Angels pitch their camp in a circuit around those who fear God (Psalm 34:7), and then but one Church existed in the world. Why, then, did not God commit this charge to more angels than one? Why did He not send forth mighty forces? We acknowledge that God does not confine Himself to any fixed rule; He can help us as well by many forces as by a single angel or by more. And He does not make use of angels as if He could not do without them. This is the reason of that variety which we observe: He is first content with one angel, and then joins more with him. He will give to one man a great army, as we read of Elisha, and as other passages in Scripture afford us examples.

The servant of Elisha saw the air full of angels (2 Kings 6:17). Thus also Christ said, Can I not ask my Father, and He will send me, not one angel only, but a legion? (Matthew 26:53). Again, **the Spirit of God assigns many angels to each of the faithful** (Psalm 91:11).

Now, therefore, we understand why God sends more angels, not always with the same purpose or intention, to inform us that He is sufficient to afford us protection, even if no other help should be supplied. He provides for our infirmities by bringing us help by means of **His angels**, who **act like hands to execute His commands**.

But I have previously remarked this is not an invariable practice, and we ought not to bind Him by any fixed conditions to supply our wants always in the same manner. God seemed, at least for a time, to leave His people without help, and afterwards two angels were sent to contend for them; first, a single one was sent to Daniel, and then Michael, whom some think to be Christ. I do not object to this view, for he calls him a prince of the Church, and this title seems by no means to belong to any angels, but to be peculiar to Christ. On the whole, the angel signifies that God did not put forth His full strength in contending for His Church, but shows Himself to be a servant to promote its safety till the time of deliverance should arise.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, since You not only condescended to unfold future events to Your servant Daniel, and to the pious who waited for the future advent of Your only-begotten Son, that they might be prepared for all sufferings, and might perceive the Church to rest under Your care and protection, but also wished these prophecies to profit us at this day, and to confirm us in the same doctrine: Grant us to learn how to cast all our cares and anxieties on Your paternal providence. May we never doubt Your oversight of the cares of Your Church in these days, and Your protection against the fury of the ungodly who try all means of destroying it. May we rest in peace under that guardianship which You have promised us, and struggle on under the standard of the cross; and possess our souls in patience, until at length You shall appear as our Redeemer with outstretched hand, at the manifestation of Your Son, when He returns to judge the world. Amen.