

Lord, Help us to See the Invisible Things You Have Made!

2 Kings 6:8-20 August 12, 2018 Pastor Robert Hein

Dear Fellow Children of God,

Every time we recite the Nicene Creed, we confess, "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen, and unseen." Now what are we talking about there? What are the **unseen** things God has made? Well, for one, that would include our souls. If you do an autopsy on a person, you will not find their soul. It is not a visible, physical part of the human anatomy. And yet, our invisible soul is very real. It is the essence of who we are as a human being. It allows us to interact with God in a personal way. As long as we are alive, our body and soul are united as one. But when we die, our soul separates from the body. The body rests in the ground, but the soul goes immediately to heaven or to hell. In Ecclesiastes we read, "**The dust (the body) returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.**" Ecclesiastes 12:7 No, we can't see our soul, but it is real. It is one of those invisible things we believe God has made.

The fact that we have a soul sets us apart from the animals. Evolutionists believe that human beings evolved from primordial cells and ape like creatures over millions of years. But that is nonsense. Animals only have a body, but from the beginning, God created us human beings to have a body and a soul. This makes us special, and set apart from the animals to enjoy a personal relationship with God.

Another invisible thing God created are the **angels**. The writer to the Hebrews tells us, "**Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?**" Hebrews 1:14 Angels are spirits. That means they don't have a physical body like we do. They are invisible to the human eye. At times, however, we know they assumed the form of a human body to appear to people in the Bible.

Angels are not eternal. They are one of those unseen things God made during the six days of Creation. Now Genesis One does not tell us on which day the angels were made. But we know that God created everything, seen and unseen, in just six days, and so that must include the angels. The book of Job suggests that the angels were created early on

as sort of a cheering section, praising God as they watched one wonder of creation unfold after another. The Lord declares in Job 38:4,7, **“Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation, while all the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?”**

It’s also interesting that God created the angels for us, for our benefit. They were created to serve those who will inherit salvation. That’s you and me. You think angels are pretty cool. Well, remember God made the angels to serve our needs. How dearly God must love us! How highly he values us!

The word angel means “messenger.” In Bible times God sometimes used angels as his messengers to reveal his will to his people. For example, God sent the angel Gabriel to Zechariah to foretell the birth of John the Baptist and another angel to Mary to let her know she would be the mother of the Christ-child. God also used angels to first announce the birth of the Savior to the Bethlehem shepherds on Christmas Eve, and again, God sent angels to announce the resurrection of Jesus Christ to those women at his tomb on Easter Sunday morning. Since we now enjoy the Bible in its completed form however, we don’t expect God to send us any new messages through his angels. We have all the messages we need right here in the written Word of God!

But today, angels still do serve an important God given purpose for our benefit. God still uses angels as his instruments to watch over us and protect us from harm. We can’t see them, but they are real, and they are surrounding us at all times. In these Psalm verses God opens our eyes to see and appreciate the powerful protection these unseen “secret service” agents provide us. In Psalm 34:7 King David wrote, **“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.”** And again in Psalm 91:1, 11-12 we are assured, **“Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”**

The Bible does not say we have one special guardian angel, but rather many angels watching over us all the time.

The Lord helps us see these unseen things he has made in our devotion today from 2 Kings chapter 6. Let's review the story once again. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was constantly being harassed and attacked by enemies surrounding them. At this time the King of Aram was at war with Israel. He planned all sorts of attacks and set ambushes to catch the army of Israel unaware, but each time his evil plans failed. You see, the Lord revealed the king's battle plans to the prophet Elisha and Elisha then warned the king of Israel so he could avoid the ambush. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officials before him and demanded to know which of them was leaking his battle plans to the enemy. But his officials maintained their innocence. They replied, "Elisha the prophet tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

So the king of Aram sent horses and chariots and a powerful army to capture Elisha. He found Elisha and his servant in a city called Dothan and completely surrounded them. The odds against Elisha and his servant were enormous. They were greatly outnumbered by 1000's of fierce warriors waiting to pounce on them. All things would seem be against them to drive them to despair.

When Elisha's servant saw the enemy approaching, he was greatly troubled and cried out in distress, "Oh no, my lord, what shall we do?"

But Elisha remained calm and secure, even in the midst of a dangerous dilemma. How could he be so calm? Well, taking God at his Word, he could see the unseen things God had made to protect them. Elisha said, "**Don't be afraid! Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.**"

Elisha's servant must have thought, "Elisha, what are you talking about? How can you say that those who are with us are more than those who are with them? I see us outnumbered a 1000 to 2. So then Elisha prayed, "**'Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.' Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked, and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.**"

Yes, the Lord opened his servant's eyes to see the invisible things God had made, a powerful army of God's holy angels were indeed surrounding them. Actually, the odds

were greatly in their favor because God was on their side, defending them from danger and guarding and protecting them from all evil.

Then Elisha prayed to the LORD, “Strike this army with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness. In their confusion Elisha led them away from Dothan to the city of Samaria where they were quickly captured by the army of Israel. And so God used his miraculous power and mighty angels to protect his people in the midst of trouble.

So let me ask you, “When you face times of trouble, when physical and spiritual enemies surround you, when you have to endure great challenges and hardships, who are you more like, Elisha or his servant? Do you cry out in fear, “O my Lord, what shall we do? Or do you put your confidence in the Lord to deliver you like Elisha did saying, “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”

Would you join with me to proclaim that statement together out loud? **“Those who are with us are more than those who are with them!”** Let’s say it again, **“Those who are with us are more than those who are with them!”**

When do you need to remember to see the unseen things, God’s holy angels, which he has made for your benefit? How about if a child has to get on a new and unfamiliar bus to take to school this Fall? How about a young person heading off to college, living in a dorm, far away from home and family, surrounded by many temptations and negative peer pressure? What about a person entering the hospital for medical tests or a surgical procedure, or cancer treatments? What about soldier being deployed to duty in harm’s way? What about a family setting off on a long road trip? What about an elderly person moving into assisted living or even hospice care?

These situations can be daunting, troubling, overwhelming. To the naked eye, it would appear that the odds are greatly stacked against us, that we don’t stand a chance, that we are doomed to failure and despair.

In times like that, remember Elisha’s faith filled confession, “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them!” Or as the Apostle Paul put it, **“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how we he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”** Romans 8:32

When the Arameans threatened Elisha and his servant, God miraculously delivered them. He did the same for Daniel in the lion's den and the three men in the fiery furnace. But God does not always deliver his people from evil in the same way. Sometimes he keeps evil away, but sometimes he allows evil to enter our lives. Yes, sometimes God allows his own dear children to be touched by tragedy, hardship and loss.

In times like this, we many wonder, "Where was God when I needed him? Where was the protection of his holy angels? Did he forget to send them? How come he allowed me to stumble?"

Christian friends, when you face setbacks, trials or great loss, let me assure you, "God has not forgotten you or forsaken you, or failed to watch over you." Sometimes God keeps evil away, but sometimes he allows it or even sends it to accomplish his own good purpose for us. In all things, he promises to work his gracious plan for our good, for our saving benefit. How do we know this? How can we be certain of this? Because we know God's amazing love for us in Christ. If God cared enough to meet our greatest need, by sending his Son to the cross to save us from sins, then we can trust him to provide for our other needs as well. And if Jesus cared enough to die for us, certainly he cares enough to live for us, and to bless us, even in times of trouble.

The Apostle Paul held to that firm conviction, even while facing a death sentence in prison. When Paul wrote his farewell letter to Timothy, he was pretty certain he was going to die, that his life and ministry on this earth would soon come to an end. But Paul did not despair. Even then, he was confident God would work his gracious plan for him, for he confidently confessed, "**The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever.**" 2 Timothy 4:18

Tradition tells us the Apostle Paul died a martyr's death in prison, at the hands of Emperor Nero. Where were God's holy angels when he died? In this case, God sent those angels to carry his soul safely home to heaven. Those witnessing this event couldn't see Paul's soul entering heaven at the moment of his death or God's holy angels accompanying him, but with the eyes of faith, we can see the unseen things God has

made for us, and rejoice. What comfort this brings us when we have to sit at the death bed of a loved one today. Remember when a Christian dies, God's angels are not absent from the scene. No, we have the wonderful assurance that God then sends his heavenly messengers to bring us home to glory.

Are you familiar with Luther's Morning Prayer? It's printed for you on page 139 in the front of the hymnal. I learned this prayer as a child and have prayed it every day of my life since. I encourage you to do the same and to teach it to your children also. Listen especially to the last sentence of Luther's prayer, "**Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me.**" Remember that and rejoice in this blessed certainty!

Yes, empowered by God's promises, you and I can see and appreciate the unseen things God has made for our benefit, and this knowledge fills our hearts with peace and joy and confidence, just like it did for his servant Elisha. Amen.