

# Wings

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*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”  
Isaiah 40:31*



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## The Price of Courage

It's easy to believe the truth, live the truth, and even teach it. But the real test comes when the truth puts us in the cross-hairs of critics.

“And they brought Urijah from Egypt and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death” (Jer. 26:23-24).

Jeremiah 26 tells the story of two prophets of the Lord who preached the same message and faced the same threat, but responded in entirely different ways. The outcome of their responses teaches us a lesson on the nature of courage.

The first prophet, Jeremiah, used a very public place — the court of the temple — to challenge the nation with a message demanding repentance (v. 1-6). This attracted the attention of the authorities, of course, who threatened to kill him if he did not stop (v. 7-12). But Jeremiah refused to budge. He repeated God's demand for repentance, then closed with this declaration: “As for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you. But know for certain that if you put me to

death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on its inhabitants” (v. 14-15). Jeremiah stared death in the face and refused to back down. Only the intervention of an admirer saved him (v. 24).

This incident is followed by the story of Urijah, another prophet of God, “who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah” (v. 20). In other words, he was on the same team with Jeremiah. And like Jeremiah, Urijah was threatened with death for his teaching. But unlike Jeremiah, Urijah did not stand firm. “When Urijah heard it, he was afraid and fled, and went to Egypt” (v. 21). His flight was in vain, for the long arm of the king found him even there, and he was brought back to Jerusalem to be executed.

The main lesson in this chapter is how these two prophets responded to the threat of retribution. Jeremiah and Urijah taught the same message, but only one was willing to back it up with his life. When confronted with death, Urijah's courage failed and he ran — but

was killed anyway. Jeremiah faced the same threat, but fearlessly stood his ground and dared his enemies — and his life was spared. Of course, cowardice and courage do not always result in these outcomes, but the fact that Jeremiah is considered a hero and Urijah is a mere footnote in the Biblical narrative clearly points us to the preferred behavior.

Courage is not limited to life-or-death decisions. In our own lives today, how many times is our faith challenged by critics, in such small and trivial ways, yet rather than defend our convictions, we quietly yield the ground to the opponents of truth? We seek to preserve our respectability, but at the cost of our ideals. God's cause is not served by such timidity.

The price of courage may not be my life, but it will surely cost me something. Ultimately, I must decide what is most important in my life: Is it winning the approval of men, or being loyal to God? If I chose God, then I must be prepared to stand by that decision in the face of opposition, whatever the outcome.

— David King