

# 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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## Striving for the Goal

Success in our lives as Christians is not measured by what we accomplish, but by how hard we push ourselves to do better.

“I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men” (Ac. 24:16).

“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Phil. 3:12).

If any first century Christian serves as a model for modern Christians to emulate, surely the apostle Paul deserves that label. He was the epitome of everything a Christian should be: faithful, obedient, disciplined, fearless.

Yet Paul did not view himself that way. He “strived” to have a clean conscience before God and men — but *striving* and *having* are two different things. More than once he had to apologize for mistakes he made (e.g., Ac. 23:1-5). He saw himself as “not yet perfected,” having to *press forward* toward that elusive goal. In fact, looking back on his life as he approached the end, he still considered himself to be “the chief of sinners,” saved by God’s grace (1 Tim. 1:15). Note the present tense of that confession: “I *am* chief,” not *was*.

Paul certainly had many fine qualities, but he was still a sinner saved by grace, with a lot of room for improvement.

If there is an example here to follow, it is not what Paul *achieved*, but the *process* by which he achieved it. His life was one of continual improvement, always pushing himself to be better, to accomplish more. That process did not stop until the day he died. Right up to the end Paul still had weaknesses and flaws that he was working to overcome.

Despite our best efforts, we will never be perfect in this life. But that is not an excuse not to try. Far too many people resign themselves to their status as flawed creatures and make little effort to do better. They could achieve so much in their lives, if they would just put forth the effort. But instead of pushing forward, they shrug their shoulders and surrender in defeat. They will lose their souls, not because they were not perfect, but because they gave up.

Salvation is a gift of God, granted to us as an undeserved gift. But God bestows this priceless gift only on those who really want it—and that desire is

demonstrated by how hard they push themselves to grow in their faith. God knows that we are not perfect, and doesn’t expect us to be; but He also knows if we are slacking off and not trying.

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), the one-talent man was condemned, not because he failed to produce a profit, nor because his output did not match that of his peers, but because he didn’t *try*. His excuses could not conceal the fact that he made no effort to produce something of value. The same fate awaits us if we let a complacent attitude prevent us from pressing on toward the goal before us.

A final word of caution: The commitment to strive for perfection will yield results, some of which we can be proud of. And that pride can foster a haughty spirit toward others whose efforts are less successful than our own. The irony here is that our self-improvement efforts will create a whole new set of challenges that we must struggle to overcome. That’s why perfection is such an elusive goal: no matter how good we are, we will never be good enough.

– David King