

Wings

*“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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Only One Angel

In His most desperate hour, Jesus received encouragement from an old friend from a familiar realm. In our suffering, too, God will provide the strength we need.

“. . . And He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me, nevertheless not my will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from Heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lk. 22:41-44).

Like any condemned man, Jesus spent the night before His death wrestling with the anticipation of His execution. But thoughts about death were not what made this night so difficult for Him. Unlike other condemned men, Jesus had an escape hatch. At any time during this ordeal, Jesus could simply say, “I quit!,” and twelve legions of angels would swoop down and rescue Him from His enemies. (Matt. 26:53). It was a temptation that had dogged Him all His life, and now at the end, it pressed upon Him with special fury. He desperately wanted a way out of this fate, but He had to force Himself to stick with the original plan: “not My will, but Yours, be done” (22:42). It was this

fierce internal battle with such a strong Satanic urge that made the Gethsemane experience so intense.

Of course, Jesus won the battle, choosing to complete His mission and pay the cost for our sin. But He did not win the battle alone. He had help from an old friend from heaven. Even though He did not get an army of angels, Jesus got one angel — just one — to strengthen Him in His darkest hour. This one angel could have easily protected Jesus from the soldiers who came to arrest Him. If one angel could wipe out an entire Assyrian army to save Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 19:35), this assignment would have been child’s play. But that was not this angel’s assignment.

Instead, this angel came to strengthen Jesus. Perhaps he spoke words of comfort to Him, or gently wiped the sweat from His brow. Maybe the angel put an understanding arm around Him to reassure Him that everything would turn out okay. Whatever the details, spending a few minutes with this heavenly companion gave Jesus the strength He needed to finish His task.

The sufferings we endure in this life may not be on the same scale as those of Jesus, but they are just as real. Why does God allow us to suffer so? Why doesn’t He strike down our tormentors, and line our path with roses? We can offer answers to such questions — all speculations — but the fact remains that we “suffer according to the will of God” (1 Pet. 4:19); that is, God has His own reasons for delaying justice. Suffering is a fact of life that we cannot avoid.

God will not rescue us with legions of angels, and it is foolish to expect Him to do so. He will, however, provide us with the strength we need to deal with the suffering. For Jesus, it came in the form of a solitary angel. For us it may come in the form of an encouraging word from a friend, or an isolated passage of Scripture that speaks directly to our circumstances; or some providential stroke of good fortune to rekindle fading hopes. Whatever form this encouragement comes in, we must, like Jesus, provide the willing heart that can profit from such divine aid, and press on to the goal that lies before us.

– David King