

# 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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## Their Houses Will (Not) Last Forever

The booming home improvement industry raises a sobering question: Why are people spending so much time and money on something they will soon leave behind?

“Their inner thought is that their houses will last forever, their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man, though in honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish” (Psa. 49:11-12).

Yesterday Melissa and I went to the grand opening of a new home center here in town. Despite the fact that our community already has several large stores (and many small ones) catering to the needs of home owners, apparently there is a market for yet another, even bigger than all the rest. This new store was jammed with hundreds of customers gawking at the thousands of products available to make their homes better, bigger, stronger, safer, more beautiful, or more durable.

This Psalm was written to the vast throngs of humanity who fear the power and influence of the rich (v. 5-6, 16). There are several ways to identify someone as a rich man, but the author points to just one: “the glory of his house is increased” (v. 16). In ancient times, just as today, the primary status symbol of

one’s wealth was a large house designed to “last forever” (v. 11a). These exotic structures were often surrounded by vast land holdings bearing the owner’s name (v. 11b). The rich man’s domicile sent a powerful message to all who passed by: “I am rich! I am important! I have arrived!”

The message in this Psalm is that the rich man’s devotion to his house and land betrays a badly distorted view of life. The rich “trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches” (v. 6), but their wealth proves to be a false god. Their money cannot prolong life (v. 7-9). In the end, they will die like everyone else “and leave their wealth to others” (v. 10). Whatever mansions they may have constructed for themselves in this life, soon they shall leave behind. Their only home that will truly be forever will be the grave, “far from their dwelling” (v. 14). In view of the transitory nature of life, their obsession with their houses proves them to be fools (v. 13).

It’s easy to convince ourselves that we are not rich, so none of this applies to

us. Really? How much of our time and money do we spend on our homes? How many of our home improvement projects are really necessary, as opposed to projects designed to feed our vanity?

None of what is written here should be construed as an argument for laziness or neglect. Like every other gift the Lord has blessed us with, we should work to maintain and care for our homes. But there reaches a point where the amount of resources we spend on a place to live exceeds the limits of practical wisdom. Our homes can become our gods, consuming resources that should be directed toward more enduring purposes.

Many years after this Psalm was written, Paul summarized its message in these words: “For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim. 6:7-8). He doesn’t even mention housing. Every time I make another trip to the home center, I can’t help but wonder: Am I really content with food and clothing? Or am I foolishly attempting to build a house that will last forever?

– David King