

Wings

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



January 15, 2012

Feel Like Giving Up?

The temptation to quit the life of faith can be overwhelming. But it helps to know that we are not alone in that struggle.

“[Elijah] went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!’” (1 Kgs. 19:4).

Several years earlier, Elijah had been sent by God to counter the evil reign of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. The conflict between prophet and king reached a climax on Mt. Carmel, where Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal in a dramatic showdown (ch. 18). The false prophets were executed, but Elijah’s lonely struggle was not over; Jezebel sent word that he was a dead man. No matter what Elijah did, the forces arrayed against him seemed to grow stronger and stronger. So he ran away into the wilderness, ready to die. Elijah gave up the fight.

Every Christian sooner or later in his life reaches a point where he gets fed up with all the problems associated with his life of faith, and must wrestle with the temptation to walk away from it. The temptation is especially acute when dealing with the short-comings of fellow

believers who do a poor job of representing the same faith we profess. When our efforts to confront the problem are fruitless, it’s hard to find the motivation to keep on living as we should.

When this urge to throw in the towel strikes, it is helpful to reflect on the fact that we are not alone. David wished he had the wings of a dove so that he could “fly away and be at rest” (Psa. 55:6). Jeremiah was so disgusted with the people he preached to, that he wished for a home in a far-away desert, “that I might leave my people, and go from them” (Jer. 9:2). Even Jesus had days like that. On one occasion, after His disciples had completely botched an attempt to cast out a demon, He responded with exasperation, “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?” (Matt. 17:17). When we are faced with the temptation to quit, we can take comfort in the fact that we are in good company.

We can also take comfort in how these men dealt with their discouragement. They knew that their allegiance

was to God, not men, and that the trials of this life could not compare to the ultimate reward that awaited them. They had a duty to perform, and were resolved to stay at their posts until God called them home. Whatever despair they may have felt, they clung to God with a stubborn determination to finish the job, no matter the cost.

So when Elijah ran away, he was merely acting upon an impulse that every other man of God throughout history has struggled with. But his collapse of faith was temporary. God gently nudged him to get back to work (19:11-18), and Elijah responded by overcoming his despondency and returning to complete his mission.

If we go through life expecting everyone and everything to cooperate with our personal expectations, we will be bitterly disappointed, and probably lose our faith. But if we accept the fact that life is hard for a reason — to make us stronger, better people — we can find the strength to not give up but keep on doing what is right, however long that may require.

– David King