

# 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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## A Nation in Decline

The rise and fall of nations is not the result of capricious turns of fate, but of a predictable process of social development among its population.

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

The concept of “righteousness” and “sin” as representing opposing ends of a universal moral spectrum is now considered an antiquated relic from a more superstitious age. Truth is no longer an objective standard to be sought and followed, but a personal reality to be constructed as we see fit. Consequently, there is no righteousness to pursue, nor sin to avoid. Everyone is free to follow the impulses of his own heart.

But while we may be free to choose our own path in life, we do not have the option to dictate the outcome of our choices. Whether we like it or not, behaviors have consequences. There are some behaviors that, by their very nature, tend to reward their owner with good health, prosperity, and the respect of peers. There are other behaviors that are more likely to result in misery and broken relationships. There is nothing arbitrary or oppressive in these cause-effect relationships. That’s just the way human nature and the world operate,

whether or not we choose to recognize it. People may scoff at Solomon’s use of the terms “righteousness” and “sin” to describe this reality, but it’s a truth that cannot be dismissed.

Applied on a larger scale, this principle explains the rise and fall of nations. The strength of a nation is not to be found in its laws, its military, its economy, its natural resources, its system of government, judicial system, civic institutions, or in any other attribute by which historians usually measure greatness. All these elements have a direct impact on a nation’s quality of life and its standing among its neighbors; but they are only symptoms of another, deeper measure of national strength: the character of its people.

A nation’s strength, in other words, is the cumulative effect of millions of personal decisions made by its citizens every day of their individual lives. Are they honest and fair with each other? Do they respect each other’s possessions and reputations? Are they motivated by selfish impulses or by more altruistic ideals? Do they honor or dishonor the

institutions of marriage and family? A nation can tolerate a fringe element of non-conformists in these areas and remain strong. But if deviant behavior becomes the norm, a social rot sets in that gradually undermines the institutions of a stable society. The result, history shows with unmistakable regularity, is national decline and fall.

How can this process of national decline be reversed? Political elections have only minimal effect on the cultural conditions among the population. Media campaigns to raise awareness of issues and educate the public can make a big splash, but rarely effect long-lasting change.

A nation’s character is changed by changing the character of its people, one person at a time. That’s the role of the gospel, and the mission of God’s people. Our focus must be on reaching “every man” with the truth that can change his life (Col. 1:28), through a slow process of teaching and modeling that truth. It’s not a glamorous process, and can be painful at times, but it’s the only path to national righteousness.

– David King