

Wings

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



December 23, 2012

That Is Hopeless!

If we are shocked at the brazen defiance of God by our culture today, we should consider that ours is not the first nation to go down this path. We can learn from an earlier example.

"Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." ' And they said, 'That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart'" (Jer. 18:11-12).

One of the benefits of reading the Bible is a better appreciation of the timelessness of the great issues that confront our own generation. We can learn that human nature, and the moral laws governing human behavior, have not changed over all these centuries. Which is another way of saying, we can learn from an earlier generation's mistakes.

This is especially true in reading the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah lived in the last days of the kingdom of Judah, before its fall to the Babylonians. Jeremiah's task was to warn his countrymen of the emerging threat before them, and to change their ways while there was still time to do so.

Our opening text is a good summary of the story. Jeremiah's message to the people was simple: God holds all mankind to an objective standard of good and evil, and we are accountable for our conformance to that standard. The citizens of Judah had spurned that standard, and were about to pay a price for their defiance. God was "fashioning a disaster" and "devising a plan" for punishing Judah for her sins. But it wasn't too late; if they would turn from their evil ways and do good, God would relent from His plan to punish them.

But even though the people were warned of their impending doom, they refused to believe it. Their response to Jeremiah's warning was, "That is hopeless!" (or, "It won't do any good to try!" New Century Version). This response reveals, not a reasoned preference for an alternative to God's way, but a sneering repudiation of it. They judged God's standard as contemptible, unworthy of even trying. "We will walk according our own plans" was another way of telling God, "Get lost!" They were determined to live their lives the way

they wanted, without any interference from God.

So God had no choice but to carry through on His threat. Many Jews were slaughtered in the ensuing invasion, and the survivors were marched off into exile in Babylon. The nation defied God, and they paid dearly for their arrogance.

The fate of the ancient Jews looms large in the background of our own nation's current condition. "That is hopeless!" is our generation's motto, a mocking dismissal of the truth that could cure so many of our national ills. As a people, we have shoved God out of our public life entirely, and out of much of our private lives as well. The corruption and violence that eats away at our national character is merely a foretaste of a greater judgment to come. Yet we push God away even harder, determined to "walk according to our own plans" rather than submit to God's.

Someday, America will join Judah as an example of the stupidity of humans in thinking they can live however they want without consequences — unless we first wake up and turn back to God.

— David King