

Wings

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



December 30, 2012

The Days of Our Lives

The end of the year is a good time to reflect on the fleeting nature of life. Doing so should cause us to use the days that lie ahead more carefully.

“For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. . . . So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psa. 90:9, 10, 12).

Moses likely wrote this psalm during the wilderness wandering, when he had the sad duty of watching a whole generation of Israelites die off so their children could possess the promised land. As we prepare to close the books on another year, his reflections on life and death can help us ponder the fleeting nature of our own lives, and how best to use them.

First, Moses acknowledges that no matter how long we may live, in the end our lives will have gone by far too quickly. Moses compares life to a sigh—a brief, imperceptible exhalation of air that nobody notices. To a young person, life seems to be almost eternal; there are so many years yet to come that it is difficult to see the urgency of using them

carefully. But as the young person grows older, the passing of time seems to accelerate, until finally he moans, “Where did the time go?” It’s a simple mathematical certainty: even if you lived eighty years, and had a penny for every day you lived, you would end up with less than \$300. Indeed, our life “is soon cut off,” and all those years spent cannot be retrieved or relived. Whatever regrets we have at the end cannot be undone.

Not only is life terribly short, for many of us it is also terribly hard—“only labor and sorrow.” We spend a major part of our lives in a job we may or may not like, earning wages that don’t seem to stretch very far. There are evil people in this world, and occasionally we have to deal with some of them. Our bodies wear out and bring us pain. Then there are the wars, the economic reversals, and the social and moral excesses of a culture that despises everything that is good. It almost seems at times that the world was designed to beat us down. For some people, death cannot come soon enough.

Ah, death! When the end finally comes, our life “is soon cut off, and we fly away.” No grand ascension into heaven, no band of angels swooping down to carry us to glory. Just a rotting corpse to bury, and a handful of grieving friends and relatives. A whole life has come and gone, is celebrated for a few minutes, then is soon forgotten.

For many people, this gloomy assessment of life is all too accurate. But it need not be so. Reflecting on these things should cause us to “number our days,” and thereby “gain a heart of wisdom.” In other words, we should learn to appreciate the value of every day God gives us, and use each day wisely, to help and serve others. A life thus spent will still be brief, but the satisfaction of a life well lived will far outweigh the sorrows, and the end will come with a confident expectation of something better beyond.

The days of our lives may be few, but they need not be sorrowful. Let us learn to use our days with purpose and vision, looking forward to a future life that death cannot touch.

– David King