

Wings

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



January 26, 2014

We Bring It on Ourselves

Every life is fraught with hardships and setbacks. But of all the troubles we must endure, the most tragic are those we bring upon ourselves through our foolish choices.

*“Have you not brought this on yourself, in that you have forsaken the Lord your God when He led you in the way?”
(Jer. 2:17).*

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A young man and young woman, both in their first year of college—and exposed to an exhilarating level of freedom—meet at a crazy party. After several rounds of booze and some flirtatious gestures, they end up sleeping together in somebody’s dorm room. The next day, after the hangover wears off, they realize what happened. The next few months are a nightmare of sexual assault charges, lawsuits, and expulsion hearings. Did either of these young people “ask for it”? Of course not—at least not deliberately. But both must bear some responsibility for a series of bad choices that led to the debacle. Had both of them stayed sober and stuck to their books, none of this would have happened.

A middle-aged couple have decent jobs with a comfortable middle-class income. But instead of carefully investing their earnings, they blow it on lavish vacations, expensive hobbies, and nice

cars. Only as they approach retirement do they realize they have precious little to live on in their golden years. Whose fault is it they are stuck with a lousy retirement? They can blame the government, evil corporations, or “the rich,” but attacking those bogeymen avoids facing the harsh truth: forty years of profligate spending has left them ill prepared for the end.

Whether we realize it or not, much of the trouble we experience in life is the direct consequence of poor decisions we make along the way. Broken relationships, loneliness, depression, even health issues and financial setbacks—so much of our pain can be traced back to lifestyle choices of our own making. We’re not looking for the outcomes we get, but we invite them just the same, through innumerable “insignificant” decisions carelessly made. We can try to skirt responsibility by blaming the results on others, but deep down inside, we know the real score. Bitter regrets (such as, “If only I knew then what I know now”) expose the hard truth behind our failures.

More importantly, Jeremiah traces these misfortunes back to a single root cause: we have “forsaken the Lord.” Religion is not one isolated facet of our life among many. Rather, it’s the foundation upon which every other decision is based. Many people view the Bible as a collection of ancient superstitions designed to intimidate and control us, and reject it out of hand. That’s a fatal error. The Bible is a source of practical wisdom that promotes a life of self-discipline, hard work, patience, and treating others with respect, so we ignore it to our peril. If we think that’s too restrictive, then fine; we’re free to disregard it; that’s our choice. *But we own the outcome.* We can’t blame God or anyone else when the wheels eventually fall off. We brought it on ourselves.

This is not to say that *every* misfortune we encounter in life is our fault. Sometimes bad things happen to innocent people. But even there, *how we choose to respond* determines whether hardship destroys us or makes us stronger. Whatever the circumstances, life is what we choose to make of it.

– David King