

Wings

*“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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Set Like Flint

Living in an increasingly hostile culture, the temptation to quietly hide our faith is strong. But we should take a cue from the ancient prophets, and learn how to stand up for our convictions.

“Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house” (Eze. 3:8-9).

“For the Lord God will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed” (Isa. 50:7).



Serving as a prophet in ancient Israel often qualified as a suicide mission. The message the prophets delivered was usually negative, and their audiences were almost always antagonistic. Most prophets were treated with contempt—or worse—and many paid for their service with their lives.

It took a special kind of courage to stand up to a hostile crowd with a message of rebuke, knowing that you might not survive the day. Yet again and again, the prophets stuck to their guns and did their job. The price they paid was high,

but history remembers their fearlessness with admiration and respect.

How did they do it? These two passages describe the frame of mind that made the prophets such capable spokesmen: they “set their face like flint.” Today we would say they developed a thick skull or a hard head. These figures of speech describe a kind of godly stubbornness, a steely resolve that refused to back down in the face of opposition.

Unlike our stubbornness, however, theirs was not of the self-serving variety. Their confidence was not in their own righteousness, but in God. They stood strong because, in the words of Isaiah, they knew that “the Lord God will help Me.” With God on their side, they did not fear their opponents: “I will not be disgraced . . . I will not be ashamed.”

These verses have a New Testament connection. The Isaiah passage belongs to the “Servant of the Lord” section of the book, describing the character and work of the future Messiah. It is echoed in Lk. 9:51, when Jesus “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” He knew that the punishments He would face in

this final journey would exceed anything He had encountered before. But like any good prophet doing his job, Jesus had “set His face like flint,” and would not be deterred from reaching His goal. His resolve to finish His mission was set in stone.

We are not prophets, but we face opposition every bit as daunting as what they faced. Like them, we are faced with the hostile attacks of an unbelieving culture; and like them, we must stand up to the ridicule, mockery, and belligerence that is directed against us. God is not calling us to a prideful stubbornness, but to a calm dependence on His strength. We must set our faces like flint and defend our faith with confidence. “Do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks.”

But what if they attack us? What if the unthinkable happens, and our very lives are threatened? If that happens, we must remember that we are not the first to have faced such a threat. We must set our faces like flint, and resolve that “I will not be disgraced, I will not be ashamed.” In the end, God will win!

— David King