

Wings

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



July 20, 2014

In Wrath Remember Mercy

If the cycle of history holds true, America's days are numbered, and there's not much we can do about it. But there is one thing we can do that will prepare us for that judgment.

"O Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid; O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years! In the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy" (Hab. 3:2).



Habakkuk's little book is unique among the Old Testament prophets. Instead of delivering a stern "thus says the Lord" to his audience in the manner of his fellow prophets, Habakkuk argued with God about how He chose to deal with Judah's crimes. God's position was clear, but frightening: the nation would be punished by a Babylonian invasion. The solution would be extreme, even brutal; but it would ultimately prove effective in removing the scourge of lawlessness that plagued the nation.

Habakkuk had a hard time accepting this. Surely there had to be a better way, a more humane way, to fix the problem. But God was firm; Judah was so far gone that only a devastating military solution could cure the disease that had infected His people.

Habakkuk eventually resigned himself to God's plan. He shuddered to

think what this invasion would entail ("I have heard Your speech and was afraid"), but he trusted that God knew what He was doing.

But in resigning himself to his nation's fate, the prophet had one request: *"In wrath remember mercy."* God's justice required punishment, yes; but He was also a God of compassion. Could He find a way to minimize the effects of this punishment and still accomplish His desired purpose?

Habakkuk's plea carries a timely message for our own generation. Like the prophet, we are appalled at the level of moral depravity that is sweeping our society. Although we do not yet know the means or timing, we can sense the spectre of divine judgment looming over our nation. The weapons for administering such a judgment far exceed in power anything Habakkuk could have imagined. If and when God's wrath is visited upon our nation, it could be horrifying.

So how do we respond? Some channel their efforts toward political or educational activities that might rescue our decadent culture. But if history provides

any guide, such efforts are, at best, bandaid approaches that will not reverse the spiritual decay driving the nation's decline. We should never give up trying to influence our country to turn back to God. But our options are limited, and we must accept the possibility that our nation eventually will have to pay a terrible price for its arrogance.

Like Habakkuk we should have a fall-back plan. If we cannot change our nation's future, *at least we can pray for it.* We can pray for God's favor upon good people who are trying to exert a positive influence in their individual lives. We can pray for God to touch the hearts of those who can be touched. We can pray for our leaders to awaken to their dependence upon a Higher Power for their positions and decisions.

And finally, we can pray for God's mercy that if and when He must move in judgment against our nation, the suffering will be swift and minimal. We can ask God to spare a remnant who can rebuild from the ruins a new social order in which, once again, our Creator will be honored as Lord.

— David King