

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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Coming to Our Senses

The transition from a life of sin to a life of faith usually begins with a flash of mental clarity, when we suddenly see the false reality we have created for ourselves—and the alternative that is available to us.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!’” (Lk. 15:17).

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil . . .” (2 Tim. 2:24-26).



Placing these two passages alongside each other reveals a curious parallel. Notice Jesus’ description of the prodigal son’s restoration, starting with “he came to himself.” Compare that to Paul’s comment that the role of preachers is to help people “come to their senses.” The original words in the two passages are not identical (the former means to return to a sensible frame of mind; the latter means, literally, to recover from a state of drunkenness, to become sober again). Nevertheless, the idea in both passages is remarkably sim-

ilar: Conversion is triggered by a process of suddenly awakening to a state of mental acuity that was previously missing in our life of sin.

This comparison offers several vital lessons about sin and conversion.

First, we learn that when we’re entangled in a life of sin, we are not ourselves. Our minds are caught in “the snare of the devil,” and it distorts everything we touch. Our warped view of reality in turn leads us to make poor choices—and to blame others for the chaos that surely follows. Our lives are messed up because *we’re not thinking straight*, and the mess cannot be cleaned up until we take the blinders off and finally see our world for what it really is.

It follows, therefore, that the transition from a life of sin requires a kind of mental wake-up call, a moment of sharp clarity when we confront ourselves with the question, “what am I doing?” What triggers this sudden shock of self-awareness? A clue can be seen in the Timothy passage. People come to their senses, Paul says, when they “know the truth.” When we are hit full in the face with the

reality of our circumstances, we are motivated to re-examine how and why we got there. Sometimes that new knowledge can be imparted by words of wisdom carefully delivered by a concerned friend. In other cases, we must learn the truth as the prodigal son learned it—by reaping the painful consequences of a series of foolish decisions. However we come to that knowledge, it opens the door to a realization that life doesn’t have to be that way, that there is an alternative to the sorry existence we have been living.

Finally, this concept speaks to the broader topic of evangelism. We should teach the gospel to any and all as we have opportunity; but our *best* chance of success lies with people who are living their own version of the prodigal son story. They may appear to be beyond the reach of God—and might even smell bad—but they are, ironically, the very ones who are *more* likely to listen to the gospel message. At least they sense that their lives are a mess, and need help. Our job is to help them “come to their senses” and turn to God.

– David King