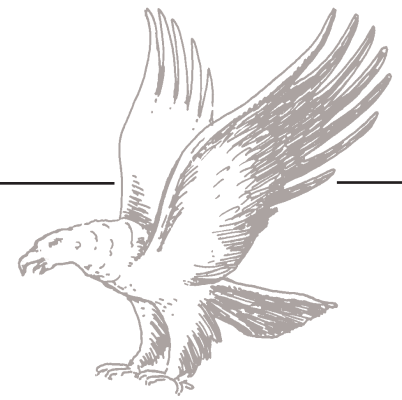


Wings

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



August 10, 2014

Gods That Cannot Save

The idolatry of ancient civilizations seems so bizarre and irrational—until we take a closer look at our own lives and recognize the false gods that dominate our existence.

“. . . They have no knowledge, who carry the wood of their carved image, and pray to a god that cannot save. . . . Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:20, 22).



Idolatry was a favorite target of the ancient Hebrew prophets. They mocked those who worshipped chunks of wood or stone as unthinking buffoons. Surely, rational people should be able to recognize the impotence of these images to deliver them.

As citizens of a more modern age, of course, we have moved beyond such controversies. Idolatry is so foolish, so primitive, that no one pays it any mind any longer, even to ridicule it.

But before we dismiss this as ancient superstition, we should take a closer look at our own lives. Idolatry is not as distant or alien as we think it is. In fact, modern man has created a vast pantheon of false gods, objects of adoration that are just as impotent and misguided as their ancient counterparts. We just have different names for them.

For example, some people make a god out of *prosperity*. Money and its material offspring dominate their lives. Every waking moment is spent getting and managing and spending (and worrying about) money and possessions.

Among the young, *pleasure* is often an object of worship. Bowing down to the god of unbridled liberty, they give themselves over to the pursuit of sex, drugs, video games, and music, blinded to any higher purpose in their existence.

More practical-minded people put *work* at the center of their lives. Every decision, every action, is shaped by a single consideration: how will this affect my career? Everything else in their lives, even their families, is sacrificed for the god of ambition.

Others make a god out of *science*. They look at the real advances in human welfare that science has brought us in the past, and conclude that science can therefore resolve *all* of mankind’s pressing issues. If it cannot fit in a test tube or a hypothesis, it’s not worth discussing.

Intellectualism holds others in its thrall. The academic pursuit of knowl-

edge has the appearance of answering mankind’s great questions, but usually ends up only raising more questions — and blinding us to the common-sense answers that are right under our noses.

The problem with all these gods is that they deceive us into believing they give purpose and meaning to our lives. They lull us into a state of complacency, confident that all is well. But when the party closes and the good times come to a crashing end, we suddenly learn that our idols cannot save us. Faced with existential threats to our well-being, these gods prove to be just as helpless as the wood and stone images worshipped by the ancients. Only then do we realize we are no different than our primitive ancestors—worshippers of false gods.

Our gods may have changed, but they are no less ineffectual and destructive. The only god who can save us is The God Who Is There—the true God who created us and everything around us, and who holds our destiny in His hands. His plea to his fallen creatures remains the same as in the days of Isaiah: “Look to Me, and be saved!”

– David King