

Wings

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



August 31, 2014

Be Strong for Our People

Those who lead God's people must look past all the minor issues and personal insults to see the greater objective for which they labor. The success of the Lord's cause depends on it.

“Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what is good in His sight” (1 Chron. 19:13).



What does a military commander do when he finds himself squeezed between two powerful enemies, front and rear? It's a general's worst nightmare, one that confronted Joab at the Battle of Medeba.

While facing the Ammonites before the gates of the city, Joab's army was surprised by a large relief force of Syrian mercenaries approaching from the rear. Outnumbered and surrounded, the Israelites were in dire straits. If they lost this battle, the enemy would have an open path to Israel's heartland.

Tactically, Joab had no choice but to divide his army. Leaving a smaller force under his brother Abishai to face the Ammonites, he personally led his best troops against the Syrians behind him.

But before launching their attack, Joab encouraged his brother with these words: “Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the

cities of our God.” Whatever the odds against them, the two leaders would have to fight with ferocious courage, knowing that the fighting spirit of their men in this battle would be influenced by the spirit of their commanders. If there was ever a time to throw away fear and die for one's nation, this was it.

Joab and Abishai had an additional motivation in the coming fight: “May the Lord do what is good in His sight.” Whether they vanquished their foes or died gloriously on the field of battle, they entrusted their souls to the One whose plans were more important than their own. On that day, “If God wills” was not an empty cliché—it was the difference between life or death.

Steeled with the resolve of men who had nothing left to lose, Joab and Abishai led their men into battle . . . and won a resounding victory.

Of all the qualities that make a man a great leader, none carries quite the same force as dedication to a cause higher than himself. A good leader leads not for glory or gain, but from a deep sense of responsibility for the welfare of his

team, his home, his nation. He throws himself into his work, willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of those under his watch. The unselfish spirit of the leader in turn inspires in his followers a greater intensity to work for their common objective.

Elders and preachers can learn a lesson here. God's people are sheep in the midst of wolves, and their leaders must understand the stakes in the spiritual battle they are fighting. This is not glamorous work, and a price will be paid by leaders who do it well. They will be slandered, their motives impugned, their decisions questioned by those unqualified to judge. But real leaders will shrug off these injuries, focusing on the higher purpose in view: “for our people.”

Above all, elders and preachers must perform their selfless heroics knowing that the final outcome is in God's hands, not our own. Not every soul will be saved; not every battle will be won. But in the end the good leader can lay down his sword confident that he did his best, and that the Lord did what was good in His sight.

— David King