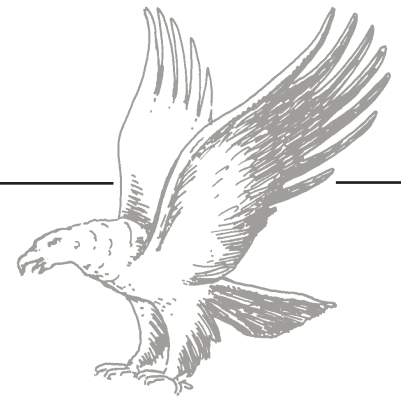


# Wings

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



June 14, 2015

## When the Proud Fall

"Pride goes before a fall," the proverb says, and the story of Peter's denial of Jesus graphically illustrates that principle. His example serves as a warning to us not to get cocky in our faith.

*"Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' . . . A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept" (Mk. 14:29-31, 72).*



The story of Peter's denial of Jesus stands out as one of the epic failures in the Bible. It's easy to criticize Peter for his cowardice, but we would do well to analyze this incident more closely and notice some details that strike uncomfortably close to home. Peter's experience is a warning of the danger of *pride* in the life of the disciple of Christ.

First, we notice that *pride inflated Peter's self-confidence to a dangerous level*. His cocky boasts—"I will not stumble! . . . I will not deny You!"—are almost laughable in view of what he

actually did just a few minutes later. Surely when he uttered those promises he meant every word of them. But his bragging involved a situation he had never encountered before. He had no basis for making such a bold declaration, especially in view of the prediction Jesus had just made about all of them forsaking Him (v. 27). Rather than crow about how loyal he was, Peter should have looked inward at his own heart and prayed for strength to endure the challenge that was coming.

Second, we see that *pride led Peter to conform to the crowd rather than stand for his convictions*. Peter could talk a big game among friends, but in the midst of a hostile audience all the bluster melted away and he chose to fit in rather than stand out. If our faith makes us look like an oddball, any pride lurking in our heart will suddenly take over and "fix" the problem. That's how an unfriendly environment can quickly strip away our pretensions and expose the weaknesses we cannot see in ourselves. It is possible to stand up to a crowd of critics, but it requires a great deal of self-reflection in

advance to prepare for it. Idle boasts only hide the danger.

Finally, we learn that *pride blinded Peter to even the possibility that he could do the unthinkable*. Peter committed this embarrassing blunder, not as a turncoat who renounced his association with Jesus, but as a loyal disciple who desperately wanted to see what would become of his Master. He had good motives for being in that courtyard; what could go wrong? Actually, a lot could go wrong, and Peter never paused to consider the risks. He walked blindly into a trap that Satan had laid for him, and his good intentions became the very means of his downfall.

Peter "wept bitterly" when he realized what a terrible thing he had done (Lk. 22:62). Ever patient with His own, Jesus later restored and forgave His apostle (Jn. 21:15-19). But the experience chastened Peter, teaching him a valuable lesson in humility. We are never more vulnerable than when we think we have everything figured out. Wisdom dictates that we admit our weaknesses, and prepare accordingly.

— David King