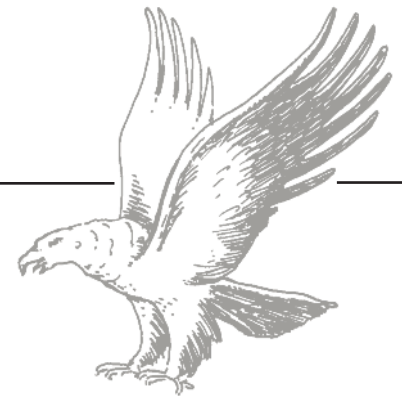


Wings

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



August 30, 2015

In the Day of Trouble

When we face troubles in life, we want God to fix them. But often the best solution is not some direct intervention from God, but a changed attitude on our part.

“Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me; in the day that I call, answer me speedily” (Psa. 102:2).



The opening lines of this Psalm should sound familiar. How often have we encountered a “day of trouble” and gone to God begging for answers? In this Psalm, God provides a speedy answer—but with an unexpected twist.

The opening section (v. 1-11) is dominated by an inward focus—how the Psalmist feels in his life *right now*. The circumstances are not revealed, but they must have been quite severe. He lost his appetite (v. 4), endured sleepless nights (v. 7), and wept inconsolably (v. 9). Worse, his enemies took advantage of his vulnerability and persecuted him without mercy (v. 8). He felt as though God Himself had cast him away (v. 10). The prospect of death overwhelmed him with a deep sense of gloom: “My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass” (v. 11). All he could see was a life of suffering and death for himself.

But that inward focus was itself a major contributor to his problems. By fixing his attention exclusively on I/me/my, he could see nothing beyond the span of his own wretched years.

So beginning in verse 12, the author’s perspective took a dramatic turn: “But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations.” He realized that “from heaven the Lord viewed the earth” (v. 19). By moving his locus of attention from his own problems to God’s vantage point, he began to see life in an entirely new way. No longer was he consumed with frustration over his own problems, but with the welfare of the larger community of believers (v. 13-14, 16, 21). He gained a renewed hope for “the generation to come, a people yet to be created” (v. 18). He looked forward to a time when the nations would fear the Lord (v. 15), and the kingdoms of the earth would serve Him (v. 22). More importantly, his children would be established before the Lord (v. 28).

By lifting his eyes to see God’s role in the wider scope of history, even

extending beyond his own life, the author came to understand that his problems were not the all-consuming catastrophes that he once believed them to be. Oh, sure, his life may have been difficult and brief, but it was part of a cosmic master plan that God was working out, a plan that would ultimately end in glory.

This Psalm offers a powerful lesson in how to deal with life’s hardships. Happiness and misery are determined not by what we experience in life, but by *how we choose to look at life*. If we view our time on earth entirely in terms of our own little dramas, we will magnify our struggles far out of proportion to their real significance—and make ourselves miserable. If, on the other hand, we open our eyes to a more expansive view of time and see the hand of God guiding everything to a majestic conclusion, life becomes much easier to bear.

So when the day of trouble comes, don’t freak out. Look at your problems against the larger backdrop of God’s work in ageless time, and take comfort in the knowledge that someday He will make everything right.

– David King