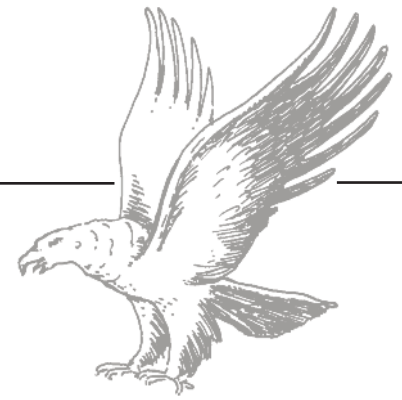


# Wings

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



October 18, 2015

## He Who Overcomes

Belonging to a local church is a privilege and a blessing, but our salvation is not determined by that affiliation alone. In the end, it is our own performance that will make us or break us.

*“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21).*

*“He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Rev. 21:7).*



The book of Revelation begins with a series of brief messages to the seven churches of Asia, evaluating them according to their fidelity to the Lord’s will (Rev. 2-3). Jesus addressed each church separately, either applauding or rebuking their performance—or in some cases, a little of both. At stake was their identity as churches belonging to Christ, each, as it were, having its “lampstand” standing securely in His presence (1:20). If a church deviated too far from His standard, its lampstand would be removed (2:5); He would no longer recognize it as His.

But within each of the seven messages we find a curious admonition. The wording is slightly different in each, but all seven share a common unmistakable message: “He who overcomes” will

receive some kind of reward (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

Think about the significance of this. Embedded within each message to a church, is a separate message to *each individual* within that church—namely, whatever the strengths or weaknesses of the group, the fate of each individual rests in his own hands. It is the *individual* who must persevere against the hardships that would hinder his service to God. It is the *individual* who will be rewarded in the final resurrection.

This distinction between the fate of the congregation and the fate of the individual offers several important lessons for our consideration.

First, it teaches us that regardless of the church’s condition, my salvation is *my* responsibility, not the church’s. The congregation of which I am a member may be strong, hard-working, and faithful in every respect. But if I am just along for the ride, content to enjoy the fruits of my brethren’s hard work, I’ll get a rude awakening on the day of judgment. No one goes to heaven on the coat-tails of others.

This principle works in reverse, too. Just because the church of which I am a member does not have its act together in every detail doesn’t necessarily mean that my salvation is in jeopardy. If I am laboring as best I can with what I have, the Lord will judge me for *my* performance, not the church’s. Consider Sardis, the “dead” church (3:1), that nevertheless had some members who “shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy” (v. 4). It is the perseverance of good people like that who can turn a troubled church around. Of course, it is possible that a church can become so corrupted by sin that association with it becomes intolerable and we have to go elsewhere. But we shouldn’t be too quick to pull the trigger on that option.

Finally, this promise teaches us that no matter how dire the circumstances may be around us, final victory is assured. I must never give up, never quit, never stop trying to do my best for the Lord. He knows the struggles I am going through, and will reward me at the end. I must strive to overcome, and trust His mercy for final salvation.

– David King