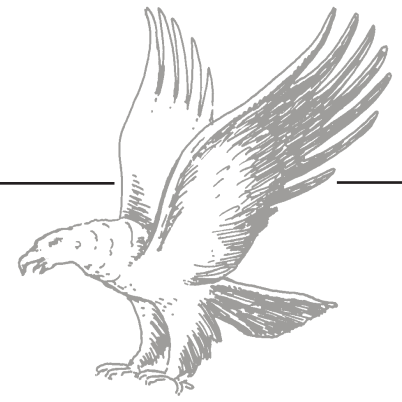


Wings

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



December 27, 2015

Do Not Seek Great Things

God promises to reward His faithful servant—but there is no guarantee that it will happen in this life. Our service must not be based on the expectation of great things in the here and now.

“And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh,” says the Lord. “But I will give your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go” (Jer. 45:5).



Chapter 45—only five verses long—concludes a long biographical section detailing Jeremiah’s conflicts with the corrupt kings of Judah (ch. 25-45). Scattered here and there throughout this section are references to the role played by Jeremiah’s loyal scribe, Baruch. Baruch was a faithful lieutenant who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to help Jeremiah get his message out. But laboring in this dangerous setting, surrounded by enemies, took its toll on him. “Woe is me now!” he cried. “For the Lord has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest” (v. 3). He was on the verge of giving up.

Verse five is God’s response to the weary scribe. Like all of us when going through difficult times, Baruch longed for something better. Surely he deserved “great things” for all his trouble. But the

only reward Baruch would receive would be the sparing of his life in the holocaust that was about to descend upon Judah. His life had been hard to this point, and it would remain so to the end of his days. Fame and glory were not in the cards. Instead of seeking great things for himself, he had to accept the harsh reality that lay in front of him and get on with his duty.

Baruch’s experience mirrors that of so many people today. They start strong in their Christian life, but later flame out and give up. They work hard at the beginning, and even accomplish much good; but in time they come to realize that the rewards for their sacrifices are insignificant. No one seems to notice or care. No prizes, no accolades, no gold watches—just a distant horizon promising more of the same thankless work. Eventually they figure “what’s the use?” and give up. They were seeking great things for themselves, and when the rewards didn’t materialize, they quit.

In our current environment, we can expect this phenomenon to become more common. Our culture may not be

as degenerate as Jeremiah’s (yet), but the trendline definitely points downward, and the level of hostility that we encounter is rising. Like Jeremiah and Baruch, the sacrifices we make in standing up for our convictions will likely become more painful. We can daydream about glorious victories and prestigious honors, but that’s not likely to happen. Many will be tempted to give up.

It’s only natural that we should seek great things for ourselves. But we live in a cursed world that is dominated by sin and corruption. We are strangers in an alien environment and no one owes us anything, so we mustn’t expect it. Our time would be better spent buckling down and getting back to work—and steeling ourselves to receive the arrows that are coming our way.

That doesn’t mean we glumly resign ourselves to our fate. God’s words were intended to be an encouragement to Baruch. God was aware of the sacrifices he had made and would reward him—even if only in the next life. Our task, like Baruch’s, is to keep on working and *never* give up, regardless of the cost.

– David King