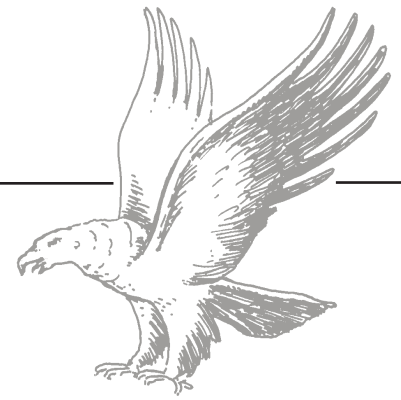


Wings

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



July 3, 2016

Free Indeed

A failure to understand the true meaning of freedom has led many to pursue a false and dangerous substitute. True freedom is found on a different path.

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Pet. 2:19).

“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:36).



The history of humanity is the story of man’s struggle to find freedom. But that freedom is elusive because we have a poor grasp of what it involves.

In the popular mind, freedom is merely the absence of rules and restrictions. But applying that simplistic definition to life almost always turns out badly. Adam and Eve seized a liberty previously denied to them, but that freedom came at a terrible cost.

Nature itself teaches us that absolute freedom is not only impractical, but impossible. We live in a universe governed by physical laws, and those laws impose firm limits on what we can do. An astronaut on a space walk, for example, is not free to remove his helmet—at least not without severe consequences.

His ability to get into space at all is based on a profound respect for a wide range of physical laws, every one of which must be strictly obeyed or he will be vaporized.

What is true in the physical realm is also true in the moral. There are some behaviors that must be restricted, or society as we know it would collapse. Even the most ardent atheist will argue for some kind of morality in human affairs. We do not have the freedom to rape, murder, and pillage. We all recognize an obligation to help the unfortunate, pay our taxes, and honor social norms (such as driving on the right side of the road here in America). The atheist and I can agree that *absolute* freedom in human affairs would be catastrophic.

Yet in every generation, there are those who try to peddle a philosophy of liberty in the extreme, a rejection of almost all limits on human behavior. In Peter’s words, they “promise them liberty,” usually by attacking religion as outdated and oppressive. These movements always flame out, when the inevitable consequences of their ideas start show-

ing up. Unbridled human passion turns out to be the cruelest form of bondage.

Jesus offers a freedom that addresses the rules in a way no other system of morality does. First, His teaching is largely free of the arbitrary and cumbersome rituals that burden most other religions. Instead, His teaching stresses character improvement based upon a universally recognized ethos: to “love God and love your neighbor as yourself.” This emphasis frees us to concentrate on those matters that provide the greatest benefit to mankind—including a lofty standard of sexual decorum.

Second, Jesus doesn’t just tell us how to live, He offers a psychologically satisfying solution to the problem of our failure to meet that ideal. Suppressed guilt is the greatest enemy of human freedom. Pretending that guilt doesn’t exist simply suppresses it further, and renders the damage deeper and longer lasting. Nothing is more liberating than the promise of divine forgiveness.

Freedom is a good thing, but only that which Jesus offers will make us “free indeed.”

– David King