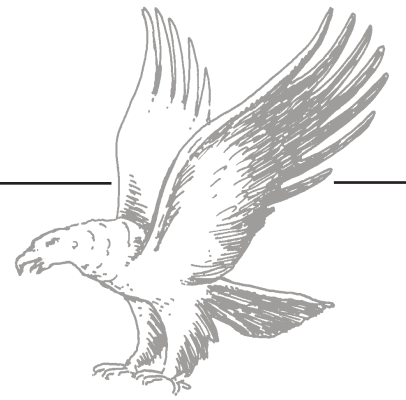


Wings

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



October 16, 2016

Advantages of the Simple Life

A life of poverty is considered a curse in our materialistic society. But poor people have some advantages that the rest of us would envy, if we realized what they were.

"Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest of the people who remained in the city and the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, with the rest of the multitude. But the captain of the guard left some of the poor of the land as vine-dressers and farmers" (2 Kgs. 25:11-12).

"The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep" (Eccl. 5:12).



As a child, I often heard my parents talk about growing up during the Great Depression. They were both born before the Crash of '29, so I once asked them how that economic upheaval changed their lives. Their answer? It didn't. They were already dirt poor, so the calamity that devastated the rest of the country had almost no measurable impact on them. Previously they struggled to get by on the bare necessities; afterwards, they just kept on struggling.

When the Babylonians swept through the Levant in early 6th century

B.C., the Jewish nation experienced a cataclysmic overthrow of the existing order. A large number of the population was massacred, and thousands of survivors were rounded up and force-marched to Babylon. The nation was effectively wiped out. However, the historical record notes that the land was not completely depopulated. "Some of the poor of the land" were allowed to stay to tend their farms and vineyards. These humble people of the soil possessed nothing the Babylonians wanted, so they were ignored. While their more well-to-do countrymen suffered a terrible fate—death or captivity in a foreign land—these poor folk were allowed to live out their simple lives in their own homes. Their impoverished economic condition became the means of their deliverance.

In our prosperous society today, we are conditioned to view a life of poverty as the worst possible fate, a condition that must be rectified at all costs. But these stories remind us that there is another side to this equation. There are, in fact, a couple of advantages to living life with few earthly possessions.

First, a simple life allows us to avoid the perils that accompany a life of leisure. Solomon learned (no doubt the hard way) that "when goods increase, they increase who eat them" (Eccl. 5:11)—that is, the more we possess, the bigger target we become for those forces that would take it from us. Poor people rarely have to worry about high taxes, maintenance costs, security alarms, insurance, and all the other burdens that are routinely shouldered by the well off.

Second, those who live with little in this life are more inclined to place their hope in the glory that awaits them in the life to come. Historically the gospel has had greater appeal among the poor than among the wealthy because the latter are so distracted by their possessions. Who needs heaven, when you're already comfortable here in this life?

To be fair, a life of poverty is not entirely risk-free. Envy, greed, or even stealing can be temptations to the poor. But if a poor person maintains his integrity, he can sleep well at night, unencumbered by the worries that burden his prosperous neighbor.

— David King