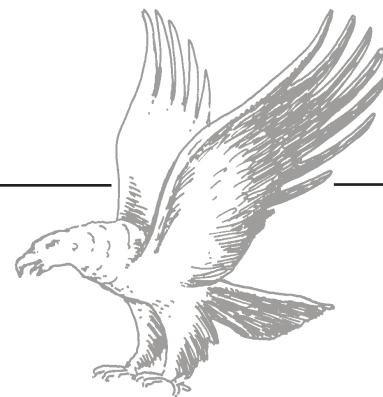


Wings

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



November 20, 2016

Judging Those Who Judge

When a critic unfairly smears us, the natural temptation is smear in return. But that only brings us down to their level. An obscure Old Testament story shows us a better way to respond.

"[Shimei said] 'Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! . . . Then Abishai . . . said to the king, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!' But the king said, ' . . . Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. It may be that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.' And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust" (2 Sam. 16:5-13).

"Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1)



This incident occurred as King David was fleeing Jerusalem during the rebellion of Absalom. Badly outnumbered and caught off guard, David was running for his life. Shimei, a relative of Saul, took advantage of the situation to fling insults and accusations against David. It was a classic case of kicking a man when he's down.

There was no question that what Shimei was doing was unjust and

wrong. He was condemning an innocent man for crimes that he did not commit, out of a heart black with prejudice. If anyone had a right to lash back in retaliation, David had that right. David's bodyguard, Abishai, was prepared to put an end to this abuse—permanently.

But David did not strike back, and he refused to allow his friends to retaliate in his defense. Instead, he quietly accepted the scorn coming his way, content to let the Lord deal with his accuser in His own time.

If you have ever been on the receiving end of an attack like this, you know how David must have felt. Your accuser has no idea what you've experienced. They've not dealt with the hardships and frustrations you've struggled with, nor had to wrestle with the difficult decisions that you've had to make.

So how should we respond when someone judges us so unfairly?

The natural temptation, of course, is to strike back. Give the judge a taste of his own medicine. Let everyone know that he is not as all-knowing as he thinks he is. Fight snark with snark.

And what do we prove when we take that low road? That we are no better than our accuser.

David's response to Shimei shows us a better way. Instead of judging our judge, we should turn the whole matter over to the only Judge whose opinion counts. Let God deal with it. However much my feelings might be hurt, I'm no more qualified to pass judgment on my critic than he is on me. It's best to just let the whole thing go, and trust God to sort it out at a more appropriate time.

Over the years I have learned that those who are harsh and judgmental toward others often have some painful baggage in their own past that at least partially explains their critical temperament. Just as they are not qualified to criticize my situation, my ignorance of their background disqualifies me from passing judgment on *their* behavior. It works both ways.

The world has enough judges already. What it needs is more people who are only concerned with doing the Lord's work with grace and dignity. Let it begin with me.

— David King