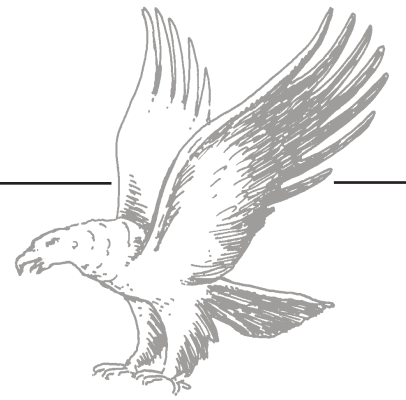


Wings

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



January 8, 2017

The Deceit of Pride

The natural advantages that come our way may be blessings from God, but they can become death traps if we're not careful. Our pride in those very gifts can become our downfall.

"The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'" (Obadiah 3).



The little book of Obadiah is an oracle against the Edomites, distant cousins of the Israelites. An unidentified calamity had befallen Jerusalem, and the Edomites took advantage of the situation to pile on, inflicting more suffering upon Judah (v. 11-14). The Edomites' behavior was driven in part by their confidence in their geographic location. They dwelt in a rugged wilderness area to the southeast of Judah. They believed their remote location "in the clefts of the rock" rendered them impervious to the military invasions that often swept through that part of the world. God had indeed blessed them with a strong defensive location. "Who will bring me down?" was the boast of a people who were confident in their security.

But no nation is immune to God's judgment, and the Edomites would soon

find that out. "The pride of your heart has deceived you," God declared, and the day would come when they, too, would feel the wrath of a foreign invader. Obadiah's message was one of judgment: the Edomites might gloat over Judah's misfortunes, but God would have the final word: "As you have done, it shall be done to you" (v. 15). Their lofty perch in the cliffs of Edom would prove to be no match for a shrewd Babylonian military.

In the end, Edom's pride in her wilderness redoubt blinded her to a fatal weakness, and she would fall like all the others. Pride always does that. The material advantages that God blesses us with—our looks, our career, our money, our possessions, our power, our social status, our educational credentials—lead us to believe that we're safe and have nothing worry about. As those advantages endure, our pride grows stronger. We become convinced of our invincibility. Like Edom, "who will bring me down?" becomes our attitude.

But pride based on such superficial properties has a nasty habit of getting us

in trouble. The security that we enjoy is not nearly as certain as we presume it to be, and sooner or later we will encounter a crisis from which none of our advantages can deliver us. On that day, our grand house of cards will collapse, and our arrogance will be exposed as the foolish pretension it is.

How can we avoid the deceitfulness of pride? The short answer, of course, is to maintain a heart of humility. But that's easier said than done, especially if we've been blessed with the same money, power, prestige, good looks, and so forth, that have brought down so many others. How can we keep these blessings from inflating our ego?

Genuine humility is the product of a mind that dwells on God. The more we recognize and appreciate the role that God plays in our lives, the less of a grip all those material advantages will have on our hearts. We will recognize them for what they are—gifts that we do not deserve, and that can be taken away at a moment's notice. Once we realize that, we can start to use them as God intended—as tools with which to serve others.

— David King