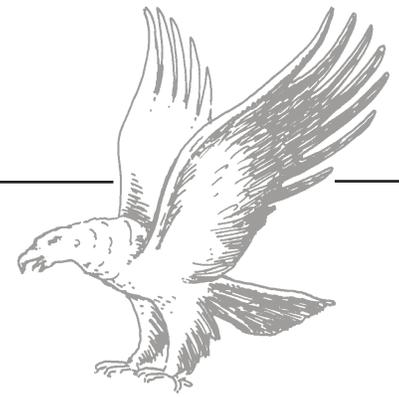


# Wings

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



July 9, 2017

## Judging Others Fairly

We form opinions of others every day, but often on the basis of flimsy and inaccurate information. Christian charity requires that we be more careful when judging others.

*“Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” (Lk. 6:2).*

*“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days’” (Matt. 26:61).*

*“This Man receives sinners and eats with them” (Lk. 15:2).*

*“He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons” (Lk. 11:15).*



These statements are a sampling of the testimony that circulated concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Take these statements at face value, and it's easy to see why He was rejected. He comes off looking like a scoundrel, even a kook. No sensible person would want to be associated with such a character.

Of course, you recognize these as highly misleading and prejudicial comments from Jesus' *enemies*. To get a more balanced perspective, we have to consider a wider body of evidence from His friends and disinterested bystanders. That evidence yields an entirely different picture of the Man and His work. It's grossly unfair to judge Him strictly on the basis of what His enemies said.

Yet we routinely mistreat people in just this fashion. We form negative opinions of others based on the one-sided testimony of their detractors, testimony that may be no more accurate than the distorted presentation of Jesus painted by His critics.

How can we avoid making this mistake in dealing with others? Here are some suggestions, based on Scriptural principles.

*Don't listen to gossip.* “He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips” (Prov. 20:19). Gossip is nothing more than one-sided testimony designed to make its victim look bad. By its very nature, it is unfair and partisan. As a counter-balance, seek out the subject's positive virtues offered by his friends; or better yet, let your own experiences with the individual inform your opinion. Blindly accepting derogatory information passed along in whispers is dangerously careless.

*Give your opponent a fair hearing.* The Jews of Berea were more noble than those of Thessalonica because of their

willingness to listen patiently to what Paul was teaching, even though it differed from what they already believed (Ac. 17:11). A refusal even to listen puts us in the same category with those who physically covered their ears before stoning Stephen (Ac. 7:57). There is no honor in that kind of close-mindedness—and certainly no personal growth.

*Remember your own flaws.* Even if a negative story proves to be true, does that reveal the full measure of the man? Each one of us has our own character flaws. Each one of us has made our own share of dumb mistakes. Do we want others to judge us on the basis of those isolated faults? Certainly not. Then fairness requires that we extend charity to the mistakes of others. “Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (Jas. 2:13).

Jesus was murdered by people who were too blinded by prejudice and hostility to see the truth of who they were dealing with. We are capable of making the same mistake, if we fail to be fair and honest when dealing with others.

– David King