

Wings

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



October 8, 2017

In the Face of Violence

The awful massacre in Las Vegas last week forces us to grapple with unimaginable evil. But it can also lead us to learn some important lessons about the world we live in.

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" and You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; there is strife, and contention arises" (Hab. 1:2-3).

"Violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise" (Isa. 60:18).



The recent massacre in Las Vegas has sparked the usual round of debate over how to prevent this kind of atrocity from occurring again. Some point to the gun culture that ought to be curtailed. Others see it as a mental health problem, particularly among men and boys who struggle with an overwhelming sense of loneliness in their lives.

I'll let the politicians and psychologists debate the underlying causes of these acts of violence. I want to use this occasion to remind ourselves of three important lessons that tragedies like this ought to teach us.

First, *there is evil in this world.* Habakkuk complained to God about the intolerable level of violence in his society some six hundred years before Christ. Experts assure us that history is finally moving beyond the savagery of a more primitive past, but today we are reminded that our capacity for unspeakable cruelty has not diminished. And as awful as this incident is, it is a tiny blip compared to the slaughter of millions that has occurred repeatedly just within the last century. Have you noticed that not a single commentator has cautioned us against rushing to judgment against the perpetrator of this crime? "Who are we to judge?" only goes so far before it breaks down completely in the face of monstrous wickedness. Despite what is taught in universities these days, there is such a thing as right and wrong, and everybody instinctively knows it.

Second, *there is far more good in the world than evil.* The horrors of that night in Las Vegas were accompanied by many stories of bravery and selfless sacrifice—ordinary people stepping up in the face of evil to perform heroic deeds

of mercy. The instinct to help those in need overcame the fear of danger and led to a magnificent outpouring of good will. The suffering inflicted by one sick individual was met by the fierce determination of thousands of others to make sure it didn't win. Tragedies like this usually bring out the best in humanity.

Finally, this incident once again reinforces *our longing for a time and place where there will be no more such evil.* Someday evil will be completely and permanently eradicated — not through government policies, breakthroughs in science, or advances in philosophy, but by God Himself. Believers have clung to that hope for thousands of years, through times of trouble far worse than what we're dealing with now. We look forward with longing to that day when, as Isaiah describes it, "violence shall no longer be heard in your land." God has promised it, and He will make good on that promise.

In the meantime, this world desperately needs to see the unconditional love and kindness of God in action on a daily basis. Let it begin with us.

— David King



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