

Wings

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



December 24, 2017

Starting Over

Humanity's universal death wish has made a wreck of everything. But God has made it possible for us to escape this disaster, if we are willing to reach out for His gift.

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18-19).



In this chapter, Paul lays out his case for salvation by God's grace. That grace, he argues, was extended to a race of creatures who were wholly undeserving of it: "ungodly" (v. 6), "sinners" (v. 8), "enemies" (v. 10). Yet despite our sorry behavior, God sent His Son to die for our sins (same verses). Over and over again, Paul uses the phrase "much more" to describe the power of God's grace to overcome the terrible effects of human sin.

A key component in Paul's argument here is his comparison of the work of the first man, Adam, with the work of his counterpart, Jesus. Adam opened Pandora's Box for humanity, as it were, thereby unleashing a torrent of wicked-

ness into the world. We did not inherit Adam's sin—Paul nowhere uses that language—but we followed Adam's lead in rebelling against God's rule, thereby earning the same punishment as Adam ("death spread to all men, because all sinned," v. 12). Jesus, on the other hand, gave Himself on the cross as a "free gift" to all humanity (v. 15, 16, 18). All who avail themselves of this gift of grace receive justification and the hope of eternal life (v. 16, 18, 21).

Step back for a moment and ponder the significance of what Paul is saying here. Adam got the ball rolling, and all of us have played our part in sending the world downward in a death spiral. But rather than watch us crash and perish, God intervened in history and gave humanity a second chance. In sending His own Son—a second Adam—to die for our sins, He satisfied His demand for justice, while providing all of us an opportunity to make a fresh start.

It doesn't really matter what a mess we have made of our lives. In Jesus Christ, we have an opportunity to start over, to leave our past mistakes behind

and rebuild our lives on a foundation of divine love unlike anything we could experience elsewhere. It's hard to wrap our heads around that kind of love.

God has given second chances before—think of Noah's Flood, or the Judges period, or Israel's return from Babylonian Exile, and so on—but this is different. All the other do-overs involved painful judgments and punishments. And only a few individuals had the opportunity to participate in the new beginning. But this time, the judgment is borne, not by the perpetrators, but by an innocent man who, in an act of unselfish kindness, gave Himself so others could be saved. And the benefits are freely offered to all, regardless of our crimes.

One more parallel to note: Adam did not force his sin upon us, and neither will Jesus force His free gift upon us. If we prefer to follow Adam's example of rebellion, we're free to do so. But if we are tired of that dead-end life and want to start over, we'll find that opportunity only in a relationship with Jesus. We must swallow our pride and turn control over to Him. Are you willing?

— David King



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