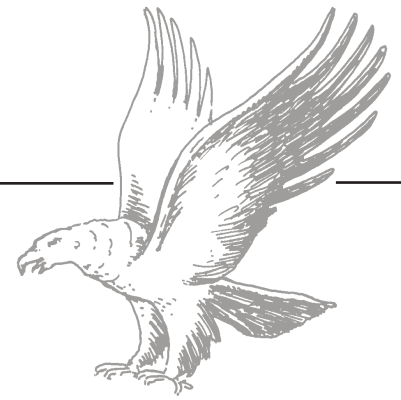


Wings

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



April 8, 2018

Stirred Up!

The formula for maintaining a strong and active faith is not complicated. It begins with two simple habits.

*“And let us consider one another in order to **stir up** love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).*

*“Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to **stir you up** by reminding you” (2 Pet. 1:13).*



The English phrase “stir up” in these two verses is a translation of two unrelated Greek words. A comparison of these two words, especially in their contexts, makes for an interesting study.

The word used in Hebrews is *paroxysmos*, from which we get our English word *paroxysm*—a sudden, violent outburst. This word usually has a negative connotation, as in Ac. 15:39, where Paul and Barnabas had a *contention* so sharp they separated; or in 1 Cor. 13:5, where love is described as not *provoked* or angered. But here in Hebrews it is used in a positive manner to describe the need for us to *stimulate* or *rouse* each other into action.

A different Greek word, *diegeiro*, is used in Second Peter. This word is typically used to describe someone being awakened from sleep (e.g., Matt. 1:24;

Mk. 4:39). The word is also used in Jn. 6:18 to describe the effect of a strong wind on the Sea of Galilee: “the sea arose” from a state of tranquility to a raging torrent that threatened the disciples’ boat. Peter, therefore, desires to *awaken* his readers from a state of listlessness to alertness.

With these images now fixed in our mind, let’s take a closer look at the common message conveyed in our two texts. In Hebrews we are to *provoke* and *push* each other to maintain a life of love and good works. We come together, not to casually go through the motions of religious duty, but to gently needle each other, to fire each other up, to get excited about the life of service to which we have been called. Likewise, Peter suggests that as we go through the drudgery of daily life, it’s easy to settle into a spiritual stupor in which we no longer feel any excitement or urgency about the life of faith we have embraced. We need to be prodded and poked that we might be *awakened* from that slumber, and step up to the challenges that confront us every day.

So what can we learn from this little linguistic exercise? First, we learn that *human beings are lazy creatures*. When faced with a hard undertaking, we will procrastinate and dawdle. If the path ahead looks difficult, we’ll go out of our way to find a shortcut, or just sit down and shrug off our duty. It’s so much easier to relax and drift along with life. If we are not pushed into action, the default path is usually one of inertia.

Second, the practical means of getting stirred up is both *intellectual* and *social*. Peter points to his writings as the stimulus; that is, we must immerse ourselves in the reading, studying, and reflecting on God’s word. The author of Hebrews connects our stirring up with “the assembling of ourselves together” (v. 25).

In short, our faith is maintained by the habits of *Bible study* and *association with our brethren*. If we neglect either one of these routines, our spiritual lives will wither and die. If we are serious about keeping our faith strong, we will build both of these activities into our daily routine.

– David King



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