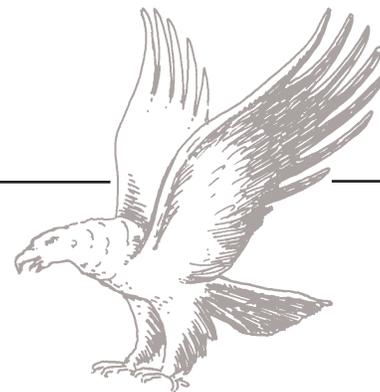


Wings

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



November 2, 2014

Corrected By Our Sins

The relationship between sin and punishment is not random or arbitrary. In fact, the connection is quite clear. The only way to avoid it is to keep God in proper perspective.

“Your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the Lord your God, and the fear of Me is not in you, says the Lord God of hosts” (Jer. 2:19).



Like most of the Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah had a reputation among his contemporaries as a scold, constantly hectoring his audiences about their personal lives. Most people just ignored him.

But Jeremiah’s message of rebuke was not the ranting of a moralistic prude. The people had a serious character flaw, and if they did not correct it, it would eventually destroy them. There were a number of obvious symptoms—sexual license, violence, lying, thievery, injustice—but the root problem was *their attitude toward God*: “you have forsaken the Lord your God, and the fear of Me is not in you.” They blew God off as a relic from ancient times, no longer worth the trouble, and their lives reflected that godless worldview.

Jeremiah’s warning in this verse—“your own wickedness will correct you, and your backslidings will rebuke you”—was not a threat, but a statement of cold fact. The day was approaching when their careless lifestyle would implode upon itself. The behaviors they embraced so carelessly would turn on them with terrible ferocity, and they would pay a horrible price for their folly. On that day, they would recognize that it was indeed “an evil and bitter thing” they had done in casting God out of their lives. But at that point it would be too late to undo the damage. They would have to live with the consequences of their decision to abandon God.

Punishment for sin is rarely an arbitrary act of God. More often than not, it is a natural consequence of the sin itself. Like the tree that grows from a seed planted long before, its fruit will always bear the image of the seed that produced it. It may take a long time for the sinner to see the final outcome, but the harvest *will* come.

Jeremiah’s warning offers two important lessons for our learning.

First, we must recognize in this story an incentive to train ourselves to take God seriously. We must humble ourselves before Him, respect His word, strive to obey His instructions. Ideally we should do this because we genuinely love Him above all else; but at a bare minimum, we should at least see it as a matter of self-preservation. To do otherwise is sheer madness.

Second—and ironically—this principle should prepare us to handle the frustration of witnessing our society’s mad decent into hell. It’s true that when a culture becomes as debauched as ours has, our options are limited. We can plead and pray, but like Jeremiah, we’re probably not going to have much luck changing the downward trajectory. Yet like Jeremiah, we can know that the wickedness will not go unpunished. The evil seed will someday bear its harvest, and on that day those who refused to listen will be corrected by their own sins.

In the meantime, our job is to keep on doing right and looking to God for guidance and encouragement—a path that will lead to its own harvest.

– David King