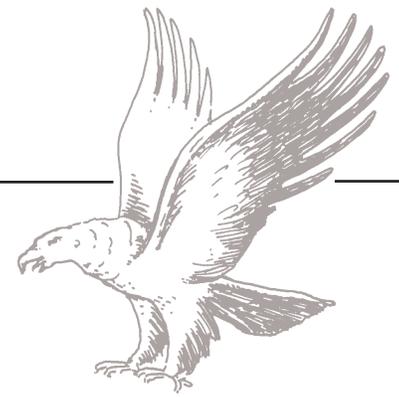


Wings

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



December 28, 2014

The Harvest Is Past

Our lives are like seasons of the year: what we enjoy at the end depends largely on what we produced through the productive periods. What kind of harvest are we reaping?

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" (Jer. 8:20).



In ancient Israel, "harvest" and "summer" were two distinct seasons. The grain harvest extended from April through June, while the remainder of the summer (through September) was spent picking fruit. In a good year, the people would reap both a bountiful harvest of grain and a generous store of fruit. In a not-so-good year, a poor grain harvest could be offset by a decent fruit season, or visa versa. But if a year brought a failed grain harvest and no fruit . . . hello, famine! This verse, cast in the form of a proverb, describes the third scenario, the prospect of a winter without food. The salvation, of course, was not spiritual, but physical; a disastrous harvest would result in starvation.

Jeremiah was not providing a commentary on Judah's agricultural fortunes. He was using this proverb to illustrate their fate as a nation (v. 18-22). Over a long period of time spent ignoring God, they had numerous occasions

to recognize their mistakes and return to Him. But they refused to do so, and now they found themselves in a hopeless predicament, enslaved to Babylonian overlords and in danger of being exterminated as a people. The season for producing righteousness had come and gone, but they had wasted that opportunity and now it was too late. This proverb captured "the cry of the daughter of my people from a far country" (v. 19)—the wailing of a nation that was doomed to destruction.

As we come to the close of another year, we should reflect on Jeremiah's proverb and ask ourselves where we are in the seasons of life, and what we need to do *now* to be prepared for the end.

To the young, the spring harvest and summer gathering—and the consequences thereof—seem so remote. Why worry now? But we must realize that what happens to us in our *later* years is the result of how we invest our *early* years. A youth spent in profligate excess may buy us a few thrills today, but we will bitterly regret our foolishness later, when it's too late to reclaim that wasted

time. The best way to face death with confidence is to spend our early years wisely, carefully tilling, planting, weeding, fertilizing, and watering. If we spend our youth building a godly character, we will be rewarded with dignity and contentment in our old age.

Even for us older folks who took a wrong turn somewhere in our youth, it's still not too late. If we will honestly face up to our mistakes and make a genuine effort to get right with God, we can finish out our remaining days with the assurance that God's grace is sufficient for eleventh-hour saints, too.

The Jews of Jeremiah's day looked back with regret on lost opportunities to save their nation, knowing that it was too late to do anything about it. The same can happen to us in our personal lives. Whatever the failures of the past year, let us look to the coming new year as a chance to make it right. Let us purify our hearts, return to God, clean up our act, and start producing the fruit of righteousness, lest the day comes when we cry out, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!"

— David King