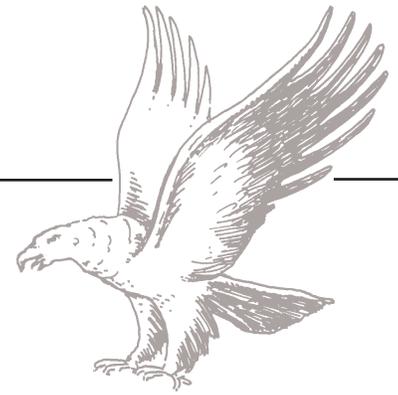


# Wings

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



February 8, 2015

## Faith On Trial

We are inspired by the stories of Bible heroes who were willing to die for their convictions. Today their courage is even more relevant to our lives than we realize.

*“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Dan. 3:16-18).*

*“If I perish, I perish!” (Esth. 4:16).*



The stories behind these bold declarations involve young Jews in service to pagan kings. In both cases, these rulers demanded a level of loyalty the Jews could not give. So they were faced with a terrible choice: submit to the arbitrary demands of the king and live, or disobey and die. They bravely chose to die.

Of course, we know that's not how the stories ended. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were delivered from the fiery furnace by divine intervention; and Esther caught the king on a good day, so he did not have her executed. But at the time they made their decisions, they did not know that outcome. In fact, they had every reason to expect the worst. Yet even with that knowledge, they did not

flinch. Their minds were set to remain loyal to God, even if it cost their lives.

That kind of courage is in short supply among God's people today. It's easy for us to read these accounts, seated in our comfortable homes or assemblies, and nod approvingly at the heroism on display here. But when we go out into the hostile culture around us, what impact do these stories have on our own behavior?

When we hear co-workers around the water cooler mock God, the Bible, or religion in general, do we speak up in defense of our convictions? Or do we quietly slink away, too timid to object? Or if we *tried* to speak up, would we even know what to say?

When fellow students at school press us to reveal our beliefs regarding gay marriage or premarital sex, do we speak our convictions with clarity and charity, or do we mumble something incoherent, hoping no one will discern anything in our response that might get us labeled a religious bigot? Or more to the point, do we even *have* any convictions on these controversial topics?

For generations, Christians have lived in an environment where faith did not require courage. Most people had beliefs similar to our own, so there was little that required defending. We could get by with a shallow faith inherited by tradition from our fathers, knowing that it would likely never be challenged.

But those days are gone now. Increasingly we are surrounded by people who not only do not share our belief system, they are openly antagonistic toward it. Emboldened by the atheistic propaganda that is heavily promoted by popular culture, they defy God and everything He represents. And guess what? That includes us; *we* are their targets. We may not be itching for a fight, but they are. And they will not hesitate to use every device at their disposal to humiliate, marginalize, and destroy us.

Are we prepared to stand up to this new hostility? We are not being threatened with our lives (yet), but our social standing is definitely at risk. Do we have the courage now to follow the lead of our heroes? Will we declare, “We do not serve your gods!”—and mean it?

— David King