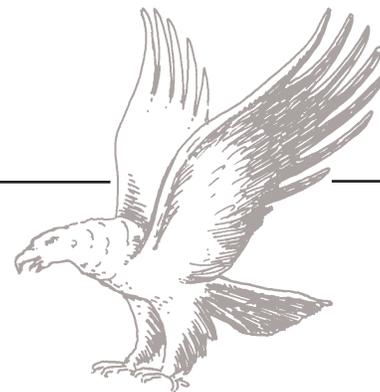


# Wings

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



March 8, 2015

## In the Presence of the King

Earthly tyrants can intimidate us, but we serve a greater King in whose presence we can boldly come—if we have the kind of relationship with Him that we ought to have.

*“Therefore the king said to me, ‘Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart.’ So I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, ‘May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?’ Then the king said to me, ‘What do you request?’ So I prayed to the God of heaven” (Neh. 2:2-4).*

*“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).*



Earthly tyrants survive by intimidating those under their authority. As rulers, they hold life and death in their hands, and *fear* is what keeps them in power. It’s to their advantage to have people quiver in their presence.

So it’s not surprising to read of Nehemiah being “dreadfully afraid” before Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. Nehemiah served the king as his official cupbearer, a trusted position of great honor. Yet when the king asked a simple

question about his state of mind, Nehemiah was terrified of saying something wrong and offending his master. So what did Nehemiah do? He quickly—and quietly—“prayed to the God of heaven” before responding with a request for a special assignment to Jerusalem to help his people.

The rest of the story had a happy ending, and Nehemiah became another Bible hero. But it all began with a simple little prayer uttered silently in the presence of a king who had no idea he was competing against a higher power.

The contrast here is rich with irony. Nehemiah was afraid to speak to an earthly king, a man who in a few years would be dead and gone like the rest of us; yet he showed not the slightest hesitation in speaking to God, the infinitely greater Ruler of all things. He felt perfectly comfortable taking his concerns to God at a moment’s notice. That closeness with God gave him the wisdom and courage he needed to answer his earthly master appropriately.

Kings may rule by fear and intimidation, but God is not that kind of king.

He commands our respect, certainly, but not because He needs to keep us in our place. We pose no threat to Him, so He has no need of frightening us. Instead, He desires to be our friend, our companion, our Father, who loves us beyond anything we deserve. That’s why the book of Hebrews encourages us that in our time of need, we can “come *boldly* to the throne of grace.” Other translations render the phrase “with confidence.” We can come before God’s throne with the assurance that He genuinely cares for us and will listen sympathetically to our prayers.

To be sure, God is not to be trifled with, and we must respect Him and His word. But that respect is not inconsistent with a spirit of familiarity. When we come into His presence with an honest and pure heart, we have nothing to fear. Whatever threats we may face in this life, the knowledge that we have a deeply personal relationship with the Creator of the heavens and earth should give us all the courage we need to face those threats, and to face life with confident boldness.

– David King