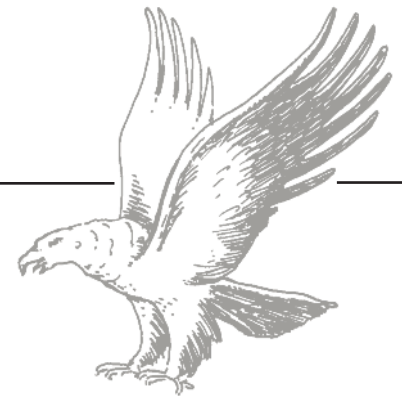


Wings

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



August 2, 2015

Two Generations, Two Destinies

Great leaders do not necessarily produce great descendants. An obscure passage in the book of Judges reveals the sad story of the family of one of the Bible’s most famous heroes.

“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. . . . Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. 34:5,10).

“Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh [f.n., Moses], and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land” (Judg. 18:30).



The connection between these two passages is the reference to “Manasseh” in the Judges text. Several translations (NIV, ASV, ESV, RSV), following the Septuagint and other textual evidence, read “Moses” instead of Manasseh. (In the Hebrew text, the difference between the two names is a single character.) If this is the correct reading, then this renegade Levite who sold his soul to idol worshippers was the grandson of Moses, the greatest prophet in Israel’s history. Apparently some early scribe, eager to protect the honor of the nation’s found-

ing family, inserted the extra character to change “Moses” to “Manasseh.”

We are faced, therefore, with one of the tragic ironies of sacred history: In one generation a family produces a great leader who delivers his people from bondage and leads them to a new destiny; but in the third generation, that same family produces a sell-out who leads an entire tribe into oblivion.

The stark contrast in the stories of these two men provides some sobering lessons for our learning.

First, we learn that *faithfulness to God is not hereditary*. Moses was a great man of God because he chose to devote his life to God. His grandson was a scoundrel because he chose to sell his integrity to the highest bidder. Each of us must make his or her own decision whom we will follow in our lives, and no ancestor can make that call for us. As parents and grandparents we can teach, admonish, and set the right example, but none of that will guarantee which path our children and grandchildren will take.

Second, this comparison tells us that *faithfulness is rarely appreciated in its*

own time. Moses was revered as a great man of God who served his people nobly—but only after he was gone. During his lifetime he was scorned, rejected, and abused by the very people for whom he sacrificed so much. His grandson Jonathan, on the other hand, did not suffer this indignity. Read the context in Judges 18, and it’s clear that Jonathan was a mercenary who was more interested in the approval of men than of God. His human masters loved him for it; but God, not so much.

Finally, we see that *faithfulness leaves a legacy*. Even today, Moses is honored as the greatest of all Hebrew prophets. Moses’ grandson barely gets a mention. Jonathan may have gained what he sought after in this life, but in the process he forfeited an honorable place in history. A life that is wholly devoted to gratifying self is never remembered fondly.

The contrast between these two generations sends a stark warning to each one of us: Our destiny in life is determined by what we choose to do, not what our ancestors did.

– David King