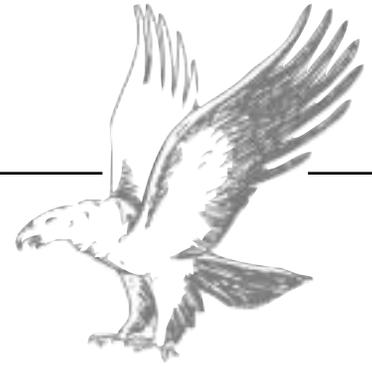


# Wings

---

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



January 2, 2011

## The God Who Never Gives Up

God's grace is amazing, but it's the sheer persistence of His love that catches our attention. It's hard not to love Him in return.

“How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? . . . My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come with terror” (Hos. 11:8-9).

Modern skeptics depict God as an egocentric tyrant who gets His kicks out of crushing His helpless creatures. This caricature portrays God as the enemy of human happiness.

But Hosea's message gives us a glimpse into the nature of God that contradicts this popular image. Earlier in this chapter, God recounted His relationship with Israel as that of a parent patiently training a child. “When Israel was a child, I loved him . . . I taught Ephraim to walk . . . I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love . . . I stooped and fed them . . .” (v. 1-4). For all His trouble, God got nothing but grief in return. “They sacrificed to the Baals, and burned incense to carved images” (v. 2); “My people are bent on backsliding from Me” (v. 7). Like most children, Israel was oblivious to the

sacrifices made in their behalf: “they did not know that I healed them” (v. 3). And like most parents, God administered measured discipline when needed, and kept on loving His children.

At this late stage, however, Israel's misbehavior had turned into wilful defiance, and God was faced with making a painful decision. Open rebellion had to be dealt with decisively, but the punishment would be costly, to parent and child alike. “The sword shall slash in his cities, devour his districts, and consume them” (v. 6).

Thus, God's despairing wail, “How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel?” (v. 8). One cannot read these words without feeling the intense heartache of a parent who must watch helplessly as a prodigal child destroys himself upon the consequences of his own stupid decisions. Yes, Israel would pay dearly for their rebellion; but no one would grieve more over their pain than God, the father who never gave up on them.

And therein lies the real lesson in this story. God is not a doting grandparent who lets us get by with murder. His discipline is sure and certain. But

neither is He a sadistic monster who delights in watching His children suffer. His love for us is a steady, constant force, always looking out for our best interests, always working tirelessly to secure our long-term happiness. The fact that we respond with careless indifference to His benevolence does not change the essential nature of His attitude toward us. Despite the total mess we humans have made of this world, God still loves us, and is patient far beyond what we deserve. We may reject Him, but He still believes in us, and refuses to throw up His hands and turn away.

It is that patient longsuffering of God that attracts the attention of the few who notice. Knowing that God has not only *not* destroyed us, but has given His own Son to die for our sins, we have a powerful incentive to listen to His pleas for repentance. God never gives up on us, though He has every reason to do so. How, then, can we give up on Him?

The irony, of course, is that those who reject God's grace because they believe Him to be so cold-hearted, have the coldest hearts of all.

- David King