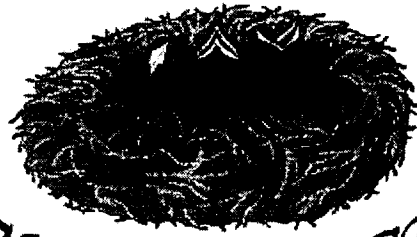
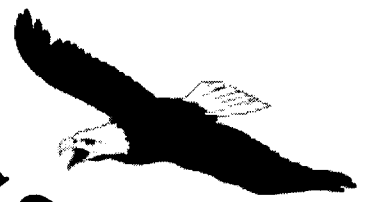


They shall mount up...

ON EAGLES' WINGS



AERY NUGGETS

...with wings as eagles.

Isaiah 40:31

June 2011

Asa 2 Chronicles 14

Steven J. Faulkner

This account tells of a day, a little over 900 years before Christ, when a great army of a million Ethiopian troops and 300 chariots approached the nation of Judah from the south. Somewhere near Maresha, a fenced city in the lowlands of Judah, King Asa of Judah moved his much smaller force into position to intercept the invading host. Asa was the fifth king in the line of David; this king had followed the Lord, and the Lord had blessed Judah during his reign as we read in verses 2-6: "And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God: For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves: And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him. And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest."

We read in these verses about a time preceding the day of trial, when there was peace and rest for the children of God. Peace and rest—what a lovely sound! Things had been going very well for Judah during the first years of this godly king's reign. We see a picture of peace and prosperity on every side, because Asa was a devoted servant of God. Yet, without much warning and without apparent cause, this challenge from the south suddenly develops, presenting a serious threat to national security, and upsetting the peace in a land where God was being honored. After some years of relative peace, Asa was suddenly faced with a serious threat in the person of Zerah and his mighty army. We read in verses 9 and 10, "And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Mareshah. Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah."



Imagine, if you will, what this scene must have looked like as events unfolded. I expect the first sign of the approaching horde would have been a huge and ominous cloud of dust on the southern horizon; then, the indistinct shape of a vast host filling the distant landscape, with perhaps hundreds of tiny flashes of light catching the eye as the early sun reflected off polished metal weapons. As the approaching masses of marching men began to come into clearer focus, with banners fluttering before the lead columns, the distant rumbling of a million pairs of tramping feet would have grown by degrees as the sprawling juggernaut approached. Just imagine the sight of countless battalions now filling this arid landscape, marching inexorably forward toward Asa's position! What a terrifying sight this must have been for the people of God!

My dear Christian friend, have you ever been faced with the growing threat of desperate circumstances? Perhaps you have never been on a battle field facing a mighty host like this; maybe you have never been in a land or sea battle at all, but desperate challenges can take many forms in this world. Perhaps business reverses or tough economic times are threatening your livelihood at this very moment; perhaps floods or other calamities are threatening your home; perhaps growing infirmity is robbing you of your independence, and there is just no sign of relief anywhere before you. Does your heart long for peace and rest? So often, we hope and pray for smooth sailing through this world, only to find that the Lord has allowed dark and ominous clouds to form on our horizon. Perhaps, like Asa, we have been following the Lord; and, perhaps we wonder why such storms are allowed to come into the lives of the faithful.



Asa was badly outnumbered, and by all human reasoning, his prospects in the desperate struggle before him were dismal at best. This godly king, however, realized that he could not look to his own strength for deliverance in this mounting crisis, and this is one of the primary lessons for every child of God in this life. We must learn to depend fully and in all matters upon the One for Whom nothing is impossible. Asa committed the entire matter to the Lord in a short prayer, but one full of faith: "And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, Thou art our God; let no man prevail against Thee," (verse 11).

I love this prayer of Asa's. He realized, as every child of God must realize, that God is sovereign; He has His purposes in the events that come into the lives of His children, and our battles in this world are not fought by our own power. Asa, at best, could muster perhaps 600,000 mighty men of valor, and yet he realized that without God, he must surely fail; in depending on the Mighty One of Israel, the battle is never in doubt, regardless of numbers. We read in Romans 8:31, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Asa committed the battle to the Lord, and the result was a resounding victory for Judah, with all glory to God, rather than to men. We read in verse 12 and 13, "So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before His host; and they carried away very much spoil."

My dear Christian friend, are you suffering just now from some affliction or even persecution which threatens you like some mighty host which is seeking to overthrow you? Remember, God is sovereign—His plan will unfold perfectly, despite the apparent circumstances. Take courage—if you are a child of God, you are not alone in this trial. Perhaps, despite the misery and uncertainty of your present situation, like Jacob of old, you can say, "...Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not," (Genesis 28:16). Your loving God and Father is above you, beneath you, and is all around you in His care; He is your refuge, and provider of every need: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them."

It is so amazing to witness how the God of the universe can use even trials and afflictions in the lives of His children in ways that the world simply cannot understand! It has pleased our Father to use the weak things of this world to accomplish His purposes; and we, His children, though but earthen vessels, are privileged to be a part of the unfolding of those purposes. Yet, like the clay pots of Gideon, our vessels may need to be shattered in order that the light of the Gospel may shine forth and a great victory won. We read in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body."

I recently read the account of the Scottish preacher George Matheson, a dear servant of God from the 19th century, whose heart was broken by the news that he was becoming blind. I would imagine that this news was sobering in the extreme in its implications since it threatened his very future as a minister. As I understand it, Matheson reflected a while in his sadness, and considered the ever loving God who had allowed this affliction in the life of one who wished only to better serve Him; and this broken vessel, who would later become known as "the blind preacher" penned the following words:

"O Joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to Thee;

I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain,

That morn shall tearless be."

--George Matheson, 1882



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