

Soaring on Eagle's Wings

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Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 0 0] Isaiah 14, particularly the words that we read there, the latter part from verse 27 to verse 31, where we see that wonderful expression of those who wait for the Lord soaring on eagles' wings.

And you see the three points on the screen there that we're going to focus on this morning, the struggle of faith as we see in relation to the people of Israel, and indeed in so many ways our own struggles in faith at this time.

But then, secondly, when we see the statement of faith, of trust in God, that God calls us to exercise. And then thirdly, the strength of the faithful Lord, the one who is faithful, the one who is almighty, the one who gives strength to the weak.

But let's focus then on particularly verses 27 to 31, because this week, well, we've nearly gone through 2020.

I can't believe this is November now, and we're progressing further into 2020. So we come towards the end of the year, and there seems no end in sight in the terribly, terrible, afflicting disease that's caused such devastation and loss, both in our own land and, of course, throughout the world.

[1 : 2 3] And it's so tempting to fall into what we might call a slough of despond, to become weary, to look down rather than up.

So there's that temptation just to be so downhearted and tired or spirits flagging, maybe even self-pity at the state of the nation that's a result of this pandemic.

But whenever we're tempted to be so downhearted, even despondent, whether it's in relation to the crises that we're facing in health or the economy and family life or personal well-being, we can never take our eyes off God.

And we can't just throw away our understanding of who God is, and particularly when we remember that God is sovereign. And yes, His purposes may well be hidden from our understanding, but yet we have to have before us at all times that knowledge of the One who does all things well.

That has to be at the forefront of our hearts and minds. So we are to be the more looking upwards and looking to God to revive your heart.

[2 : 4 0] Looking to the One, the Eternal One, who alone can reinvigorate the Spirit and enable you to seek His glory. Yes, even through these difficult times.

And so we come to worship God this morning. Yes, to call upon His name, to give Him the praise and the glory, but surely at the same time to be strengthened in what truly matters, to live for God's glory.

And yes, to seek to prosper the cause of the Gospel, even in our own land and even throughout the world, and to do it in His strength. And yes, to do what God gives us to do in His strength, to be the more self-disciplined, to be self-disciplined in our walk with Him and in our fellowship one with another, so that your fellowship with God is deepened as you come before Him, as you give Him the glory because of His love for you and for each other.

And there's that need to grow in Christ, to grow not just in Christ, but into Christ, to sit at His feet and to be strengthened in Him and to do as Isaiah proclaimed to the people of Israel, to wait for the Lord.

We'll come back to that wonderful statement in a few moments, to wait for the Lord, to renew your strength, to mount up with wings like eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.

[4 : 15] So let's look at these words, these words of comfort and encouragement. We need that comfort and encouragement from God's Word. And let's seek by God's grace then to worship Him for the blessing of His Word, for the encouragement that we derive from the very Word of God and apply it.

We seek to apply the truth that we find here, even in Isaiah 40, as we seek to be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might. So let's look first of all at the struggle of faith, as we see there in verse 27, because as we come to this passage, we find that the people of Israel are suffering.

We're not told the particular circumstances in which they're suffering, but there's such a desperate condition that they have that they're actually expressing a self-pity.

They're actually pitying themselves as they're crying to the Lord. And Isaiah is speaking to the people. He's telling them, Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel?

My way is hidden from the Lord and my right is disregarded by my God. Isaiah the prophet, he's perplexed. He's perplexed at the people's attitude towards God.

[5 : 34] He's asking, Why are the people continually complaining in their ignorance? Because in their ignorance, the people are saying that God's unaware of their circumstances.

He's unaware of their suffering, they're saying. In their ignorance, they're saying that God doesn't care. They're thinking that God's just ignoring them in their misery.

It's as if they're saying, Where are you, Lord? How can our covenant God allow us to suffer as we do? Is that your response? Is that the response of the church today, even in the current circumstances of our time?

Are you even being tempted to cry out, Where are you, Lord? And what's happening in the world? And I don't just mean the coronavirus, the pandemic that's happening, but where are you, Lord?

Even when we see such intense hatred against the Lord and His church, against God and His church, when we see evils all around that seem to be going unpunished, when wrong is declared right and right declared wrong, where sin is just laughed at and righteousness condemned.

[6 : 47] Are you tempted to cry out and to think that God's unaware of the times that you're living in? Are you tempted to think that God is unaware of all the circumstances that you're facing and others facing at this time?

I mean, how do you answer these perplexities of the heart when it appears that the evil has just got no limits, when it appears that the church has just been marginalized and regarded by so many as just a social club?

Many of us have become weary and tired even through the current pandemic and are asking, Lord, why? Why have you allowed this to happen?

Aren't you concerned for us as a people? I mean, where's the answer to these questions? Well, the answer's found in God's Word, even as we find the answer here and as Isaiah speaks of the wrong thinking of the people of Israel when they were complaining, when they perceived that God was ignoring their plight.

So, what about the statement of faith then that we find in verse 28 to 29 where Isaiah exhibits this faith? Have you not known?

[8 : 04] Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might, he increases strength. Isaiah can't quite believe that the people had sunk to such a low position in their ignorance of God.

They were totally ignorant of who God is because they were limiting God. They were limiting God to some kind of unseeing, unknowing deity.

Isaiah is reminding the people that God is the eternal one. He's the creator of all things. God isn't limited by space and time as we're limited.

No, God is the all-powerful one. So, all the complaints of the people against God, they're unfounded because they showed a sheer lack of knowledge about God, about who God is.

[9 : 13] Their thoughts of God were too little. Isn't that so often the case with ourselves? That my thoughts, your thoughts of God are just so little, so limited when you make God in your own image.

You know, we can so limit God's love. We can so limit His grace. We can reduce God to something that really He ought to be exalting ourselves rather than you and I exalting God.

He's the creator of all things. But listen to God's word. Listen to Scripture and what God tells us in His word about who He is. And the more we grasp who God is in His greatness, in His all-knowing, in His all-seeing, in His infinite knowledge, we would bring that to our hearts and minds.

We'd stop complaining. We'd stop asking where God is. God is everywhere. There's nothing that lies beyond God's ability or God's influence.

And that's His power as Isaiah is telling us here. God's power is such that He empowers the weary and gives strength to the weak.

[10 : 31] Let's just look at this more closely. He empowers the weary. Now, who are the weary? Well, the weary can refer certainly to those who are tired, tired physically, tired mentally, tired spiritually even.

And surely then, this is a timely word of comfort and encouragement to each one of us even at this particular time, this difficult time.

And I know many of you are weary, weary through the various limitations of our circumstances. Many of us are mentally weary, emotionally weary, spiritually fatigued in all the circumstances that we're facing and enduring.

But where do you look for that restorative strength? Where do you find that antidote to that weariness and powerlessness? Where do you look to?

Well, you look to the Lord. You turn to Him. Look, turn to the Lord Jesus. What did Jesus say? He said, Come to me, all you who are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[11 : 38] And truly, we do need to come to Jesus and find that rest in Him. It's that rest for the weary that you hear echoed in the well-known hymn. Are you weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?

Precious Savior, still a refuge. Take it to the Lord in prayer. It's that reality that really shines before us even here in this passage.

God is able. He does give power to the weak, to the tired. He strengthens the one even who's at His wit's end. And you do find that rest in Him because He gives you that life-changing power, even His power.

And it's the testimony of the Lord's people. When we can't always, can't even at times, really understand the Lord's ways with us, even in particular times and circumstances, but we have that comfort to know that God knows, that God cares, that He's sovereign over all.

And yes, sovereign even over this pandemic. Yes, the Lord's people will be crying out, we are weary, but we're not in despair. But we trust in the Lord, the Lord who made heaven and earth.

[12 : 58] And there's nothing beyond His knowledge and nothing beyond His care. And you who have faith in the living and Lord Jesus. Well, it's for you to echo even the words we find in another Old Testament passage in the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk declared with strength of faith, though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines. The produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food.

The flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls. Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

God the Lord is my strength. And that emphasis on God the Lord is my strength, your strength. Well, it's captured so beautifully in this last section that we read in verse 30 and 31.

The section, I suppose I want to spend more time on than the other two sections, but where we find before us the strength of the faithful Lord.

[14 : 07] Even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted. But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles.

They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. Now, we've already read in an earlier verse, verse 28, we've already read that God doesn't faint.

God doesn't grow weary. He's the eternal one. He's got no limits. He's the inexhaustible God. God who doesn't change. But in contrast to God, what do we find?

We find that man is fragile. And even those who appear to be strong, there's no strength within themselves. As we see here, as Isaiah tells us, even youth, those who are supposed to be the strongest, they faint.

They're weary. Even those in the prime of life, fainting, tired, falling. And it's that imagery here that really tells us of our own inability to do the will of God.

[15 : 14] Our own inability in and of ourselves to do what's right and honoring to God. And the person who thinks that, you know, he can please God by his own wisdom, that person's a fool.

The person who thinks that he can fulfill all righteousness just by his own efforts, his own intelligence, can do, you know, all these things without God's help, I'm afraid that person's deluded.

Even those who appear strong and able and intelligent and gifted, as Isaiah tells us, are just the fainting, falling, wearied, like these tired young men that Isaiah writes of.

Just as the psalm writer tells us, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it. And you know, in our own wearisome journeys, you know, whenever we seek to serve God with our own strength, we're going to stumble, we're going to fall.

But there is an answer. There is hope for the tired and weary. There's hope for you who are exhausted even in the experiences of life that lived without recourse to the God of all grace.

[16 : 28] Where's that hope found? That hope is found in the one who calls you to himself. And you see that word at the beginning of verse 31. But, but, verse 31, even youths shall faint and be weary and young men shall fall exhausted.

But, they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. But, but, and here's the hope that you find, the hope for the weary.

Here's the answer to your, your tiredness, your weariness. Here's your, the answer to your fragility. even when even these times that we're living in seem so hopeless.

Hope, true, sure hope is found in the Lord. And the solution to that weariness is to turn to Him, to wait for the Lord.

And this is something that, you know, really we have to grasp. This reference to wait for the Lord. It's not just waiting on the Lord. Yes, we wait on Him. We, we worship Him.

[17 : 31] We wait on Him. But there's this emphasis in waiting for the Lord. You're waiting for something. You're expecting something to happen. You're waiting for somebody.

You're expecting that person to come. And that waiting for the Lord then, it involves, well what does it involve? It involves patience. It involves trust, trust in Him.

It involves that expecting hope that God will give you what you need, what's required to strengthen your faith, to give you that renewed zeal, to enable you to do the work that God has given you to do in His name.

And it's that waiting for the Lord. Well, it's going to involve patience, patience, who knows? But it's not our time that counts.

It's God's time, it's God's timing that's all important. And you know that your strength is derived from knowing that God does all things well in His time.

[18 : 32] And so that waiting in the Lord, it involves a faith, a deepening of faith, a trust, a mature trust in the Lord. You know, in the times that we're living in, you know, when things don't happen in our, as it were, timescale and we're disappointed, that actually brings about a weariness, a tiredness, a despondency.

But remember, God's time, God's timing is perfect. And it's for you and for me to exercise that patient trust in the one who's all-knowing, all-seeing, the one who promises to renew your strength in Him so that your zeal for Him increases, your witness is stronger, and you have that promise within you that He's doing all things well and rest in that promise.

That rest that, as Isaiah tells us here, that rest that enables you to, well, to soar with eagle's wings. Let's just think for a moment here. Just think of this waiting for the Lord, this patient trust so that you rest in Him.

You know, the body needs physical rest. We have to rest repeatedly, regularly, so that we're strengthened more for particular action, stronger activity.

The mind needs rest at times, regular rest, so that your powers of thought increase. Well, if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus, you need to rest in Him continually and regularly rest in the Lord so that your strength for further action and service for Him increases.

[20 : 23] And I ask you, are you resting? Are you taking time to rest in the Lord? To wait for the Lord? To wait for the Lord as you turn to His Word?

As you truly find rest in all His promises? As you meditate on His Word? As you pray continually? As you rest in that intimate relationship that the Lord gives you through His love?

Or are we just rushing? Rushing? Maybe even a particular aspect of the Lord's work? But rest in Him.

And instead of panicking before even this current world crisis, trust in the Lord that He's all-sovereign. Yes, even in these days of challenge.

I remember many years ago when I was a young pupil in Burrumur. My history teacher, to me at the time seemed very old.

[21 : 21] He was probably younger than I am now. But he was telling of his experience in the war, in the Second World War. I'm not sure if he was a pilot, but he certainly spoke with great knowledge of being an RAF pilot.

And he spoke of the time when there was real danger in the cockpit, real danger to his aircraft. But instead of frantically, you know, operating this control and that control, he mentioned about just exercising patience, having that calm trust to know that the technology of that aircraft was actually going to enable him to land safely.

And surely for the Christian then, there's not going to be, there should not be that frantic, you know, panicking, moving here and there.

You know, as with Martha and the story of Martha and Mary, you know, Martha who was so distracted and worried about this and about that. But as we find in certainly Luke's account to Martha's Mary, sister Mary, just sitting at Jesus' feet, waiting on the Lord.

Well, you hear the voice of Jesus. You hear that voice speak to Martha. And when you hear Jesus' words to Martha, replace the name Martha with your own name.

[22 : 42] Martha, Martha, you're anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Martha, Martha, you're anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary.

Well, that one thing that Mary knew was to wait for the Lord, to wait for Him as she listened to Him. And it's this wonderful picture that Isaiah gives us here of the person who waits for the Lord and the person who waits for the Lord, being given that renewed strength, that fresh zeal, that renewed vigor to serve the Lord and to trust in Him in every circumstance of life.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint. There's three wonderful imageries just in these few words.

The imageries of the person who waits for the Lord, the person who exercises patience in waiting for the Lord, trusting in the Lord, hoping in the Lord, and the all-powerful, almighty God.

The three imageries. Well, the first one there that the believer who's, of the renewed believer who's compared to an eagle. The eagle, the most powerful of birds. Have you ever seen an eagle rise into the air?

[24 : 05] There's that effortless soaring into the sky that speaks of the eagle's power, its energy. It just rises higher and higher as it's looking down to search for its prey.

To provide for its young. Well, the believer's promise. You're promised that renewed energy in the Lord when you wait for the Lord.

It's what the psalmist in Psalm 30 spoke of in that transformation in his life, the one who waited for the Lord. Psalm 30, you've turned for me my mourning into dancing.

You've loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. Then there's the imagery of the runner, the runner who runs and runs and isn't weary in that running.

You know yourselves in long distance running, the 10,000 meters, a 5,000 meter runner. He doesn't run at an enormously fast pace right at the start of the race.

[25 : 06] He paces himself throughout the race. He doesn't weary himself in that running. And the Christian, just in the same way, the Christian who waits for the Lord, he's going to find, she's going to find a renewed energy to do the Lord's work and to know an enabling a help that ordinarily, naturally, you can't do.

And so that the believer can truly exclaim with triumph as with the Apostle Paul, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

But then there's the third imagery here, the believer, the renewed believer, somebody who's walking on a long journey and doesn't faint in the mid-eastern sun.

And the journey that God's giving each one of you, yes, it's a journey that involves faith, trust, and obedient service. That journey that involves a close walk with the Lord.

And it's a walk, a journey that's going to find many obstacles, many hurdles, difficulties, toils, snares. Yes, you know that.

[26 : 19] But you don't walk that journey on your own. The Lord Jesus, the Saviour, is with you by your side. He's with you. He's before you.

He's beside you to sustain you, to strengthen you in that journey, that journey that you're making in that life of faith. So wait for the Lord on that journey and trust Him.

The Lord Jesus has promised to be with you even to the very end of the age. So truly then, truly believe with all your heart as you echo the words of Isaiah, that He gives power to the faint and to Him who has no might, He increases strength.

Amen. And let us pray. Lord, we come before you seeking your face. We come before you as we wait for you and ask, Lord, that you will gift to your people patience, trust, an expectant hope.

Lord, when we are weary, we pray for your strengthening. When we are tired, Lord, lift us up. Enable us to cast our eyes upon our Savior, the Lord Jesus, who died for us.

[27 : 37] May we have that strength, may we have that renewed zeal, that vigor as we rest in Him. Bless then, we pray your word. Continue with us. So again, we offer up unto you worship through the praise of your name.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.