

ESF, Lord's day service message  
2/12/2017

### **The Source of Strength**

Isaiah 40:26-31

*26. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them missing. 27. Why do you say, O Jacob and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? 28. Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29. He gives strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak. 30. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31. but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.*

A South American company purchased a fine printing press from a firm in the United States. After it had been shipped and completely assembled, the workmen could not get it to operate properly. The most knowledgeable personnel tried to adjust it, but to no avail.

The company finally sent a wire to the manufacturer, asking for a representative to come and fix it. Sensing the urgency of the request, the U.S. firm sent the designer of the press. When he arrived on the scene; the company officials were skeptical because he was young. After discussing the situation, they sent this cable to the manufacturer: "Your man is too young. Send a more experienced person." The reply came back, "He made the machine. Let him fix it!"

We may be in a similar situation. When every area of life seems to be in chaos and we don't know how to fix it, there is a way to fix it. It is to invite the creator of our lives and follow his instruction on how to fix our problem.

When we are weak, we must invite God to help us. He completely understands our weakness and can provide strength.

God who gives us strength wants us to live not as ducks or chickens but as eagles, not just a life of waddling on earth, but a life of soaring up in the sky. God gives us strength to overcome our weariness and soar like eagles. How can we receive this strength?

### **Lift your eyes and look to the heavens**

This word was given to people who were living with difficult trials and became really weary of their suffering. They felt that God did not care about their suffering and had abandoned them. Then God encouraged them through the prophet Isaiah to lift their eyes and look to the heavens and try to figure out who created all the stars. Why? Because by doing so, they could turn their focus from themselves and their difficult condition to God who is almighty, who is in control of everything, and has solutions for every problem they faced: *Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them missing.*

To give us strength when we are weak, God encourages us to turn our eyes from ourselves to Him. If you look at your weakness, you will get weaker. But if you focus on God who has unlimited strength, you can find strength for yourself. If you focus on the troubles in your life, you will get tired and sick, but if you focus on God who is always in control of all things, you will find that He still cares for you and you will regain strength from His care.

There is a story about a little eagle that fell out of its nest and landed in a chicken yard. The eagle grew up among the chickens and, although he

looked a bit different, he learned to walk like a chicken and eat like a chicken.

One day the young eagle looked up into the sky and saw a beautiful eagle soaring above. The little eagle in the chicken yard thought, "Oh, I wish I would fly in the sky like that bird!"

As the eagle soared overhead, it looked down and saw the young eagle below. Suddenly he flew down and asked, "What are you doing here?" The little eagle replied, "I am just here in the chicken yard where I have always been."

The great eagle looked and said, "Spread your wings, boy. You do just what I do. Follow me." Then he flapped his wings and lifted off the ground. The little eagle had been living among these chickens for so long that he didn't know who he was. He flew off into the sky and never returned to the chicken yard again!

The best way to gain strength when we are weary is to stop looking at ourselves, stop looking at our conditions, and start looking up to God. It is to turn our focus constantly from ourselves and our conditions to God who can deliver us from all our troubles and give us strength to soar above our troubles. That is why God did not put the cross down in a valley but on a hill where the savior Christ was crucified and was lifted up (John 3:14-15). So, turn your eyes from looking at yourself to looking up to Christ on the cross. Turn your eyes from your troubling circumstances to God who is in control of all circumstances. You will find God's mighty power and His personal care for you. You will regain strength in God. With His strength, you will soar above your troubles.

### **Keep acknowledging God's goodness**

In their difficult circumstance, the people were complaining. "*My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God*"? We may feel the same way when we have suffered for a long time. The Psalmist

expresses the same feeling in his trials in Psalm 13:1: *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*

Sometimes, you may feel that God does not care about how much you are suffering. You may feel that God is not doing anything to take care of your troubles. Then you may complain the same way: God, how long should I suffer? Why don't you do anything for me?

But complaining does not help us at all. While we are complaining, our spirit is weakened, our faith is weakened, and we feel more miserable. So, this word encourages us to stop complaining about what God doesn't do, and to start acknowledging who God is and what He does for us: *Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak* (verses 28-29).

By constantly acknowledging who God is and what He does for us, we can regain our faith. We can put our trust in God who never forsakes us in our troubles. Proverbs 3:5-6 says: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths.*

When God led the people of Israel in the desert for forty years, the main lesson God taught them was to stop complaining in all circumstances, acknowledge the positive effects of God's grace, and live with a thankful heart.

When they thought about all the difficulties in the desert, they had plenty of reasons to complain. They were traveling and living under the scorching heat in the day time, and extreme cold at night. They ate only one kind of food, manna, for many days, weeks, months and years.

Sometimes they could not find water to drink and suffered from thirst. When they focused on these things, they felt miserable. They did not know what in the world God was doing in their lives and they complained.

But time after time, God encouraged them to be grateful, to see something good in God's gifts. In fact, God was leading them with miracles every day. Because daily the bread, manna, was coming down from heaven. They did not do anything to make the manna. That manna gave them enough nutrition and strength to live and travel in the desert day after day for many years. Also, God miraculously provided them with cloths and shoes which they did not make. God miraculously provided them with water to quench their thirst. God led them with a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night to guide them in the desert (Exodus 13:21-22). God protected them, guided them and provided them with His almighty power. So, when they acknowledged those positive aspects from God, they could be thankful to Him and be strong always.

Even when you are facing many troubles in your life, try to find something good God has blessed you with and be thankful for that. In all circumstances, intentionally acknowledge the goodness of God: *God! I believe that you are in control of everything. God, you govern everything and every circumstance with your wisdom which is always good. God, thank you for all your provisions in my life-daily bread, shelter, cloth, my family, my church, health. God, the fact that I am still alive is a miracle. Thank you for my life.* When you acknowledge God's grace and love for you like that even during troubles, God will be pleased with you and He will surely pour His mighty strength onto your life.

### **Hope in the Lord**

This text also shows us another way to provide strength in all circumstances. It is to hope in the Lord. The word "hope" in this text

means to wait on the Lord with trust in and confidence of His deliverance. How can “hoping in the Lord” strengthen us always? While we are waiting with hope in the Lord, God uses our troubles to discipline us and strengthen our faith.

It is like an eagle’s discipline of her eaglet. Deuteronomy 32: 9-11 says: *For the Lord’s portion is his people, ...In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; ...like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions*

When God calls you to be His child, He has a wonderful plan for you. His plan is to make you an eagle. He may use circumstances which are uncomfortable or even painful. However, He will always protect you and make you strong as an eagle does for her eaglet.

A flying eagle is a magnificent sight. He soars in the air above the earth. But it doesn’t just happen overnight. It happens through the mother eagle’s discipline of her eaglet. When a mother eagle builds her nest, she starts with thorns, broken branches, sharp rocks, and several other items that seem entirely unsuitable for the project. But then she lines the nest with a thick padding of wool, feathers, and fur from animals she has killed, making it soft and comfortable for the eggs. By the time the growing birds reach flying age, the comfort of the nest and the luxury of free meals make them quite reluctant to leave. That’s when the mother eagle begins “stirring up the nest.” With her strong talons, she begins pulling up the thick carpet of fur and feathers, bringing the sharp rocks and branches to the surface. As more of the bedding gets plucked up, the nest becomes more uncomfortable for the eaglet. And the eaglet must leave the prickly nest.

Soon after, the mother eagle picks up her eaglet and flies high, 1000 ft, 2000 ft up to 5000 ft above the ground. Suddenly, the mother tips the

eaglet off and it goes hurtling down. It flaps its wings but nothing happens and the earth looks closer and closer. Just as the eaglet is about to be splattered all over the ground, the mother eagle swoops down and catches the eaglet and the process is repeated until the eaglet can fly. The fearful plunging sensation and feeling of abandonment is part of the learning process to soar as an eagle! The discipline of an eagle for her eaglets seems to be harsh and dangerous. But it is necessary for an eaglet to be an eagle.

God allows us to go through trials so we can learn to be strong in His mighty hands. Without God's protection, trials give us just pain and suffering. But with God's protection, trials make us strong. To teach this lesson to His disciples, Jesus allowed them to face storms in the sea at dark night. They did everything they could to overcome the storms but to no avail. At that moment, Jesus came to them, calmed the storms and saved them (Matthew 8:23-27; 14:22-33). Jesus trained them to find strength in His mighty protection in all circumstances.

When we constantly experience God's mighty protection during our trials, we become stronger. So, when you are in trials, wait on God's deliverance. Even if your trials are severe and long, hope in God who watches over you, who never forsakes you. God will make you an eagle. You will soar above all your troubles.