

Chapter One

FLYING HIGH

What a wonderful picture God gives to us through the prophet Isaiah as recorded in Chapter 40 vv.28-31:

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.

*He giveth power to the faint; and to them that hath no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; **they shall mount up with wings as eagles**; they shall run and not grow weary; and they shall walk and not faint.*

[The words 'wait upon' in the last verse would be better translated as 'abide in' ('entwined in') as the root meaning of the Heb. word qavah. (See Strong's #6960)]

The Psalmist David writes in Psalm 103:1-5:

Bless the Lord O my soul: and all that is within me bless His holy name.

Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all His benefits:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases;

Who redeemeth thy soul from distraction; Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;

*Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed **like the eagle's**.*

I have watched a squadron of Canada Geese as they flew in formation overhead; I have seen a flock of pelicans rising from the waters of a turbulent lake; I have observed an army of vultures descend on a rotting carcass, but I have never seen anything as impressive as a mature eagle soaring on high, far above all other birds, ruler of all it surveys. It is little wonder that the Romans of old and the Americans of today, should take it as a symbol of their great nations.

One of the most wonderful days of my life was spent on Saturna Island just off the western coast of Canada where, with three friends visiting me from Wales, I stood on the top of a high hill among six or seven eagles swooping down into the valley below us and then soaring into the sky above, passing within a few feet of our outstretched hands. They seemed to make little effort, no wings were busily flapping as they rode the air currents rising up the steep slopes to that high ground.

It is God's desire that His people become all they should be - as eagles soaring into heavenly places with Him. However, so many of us have never learned to fly, being content instead to stay in the comfort of our nests, digesting the latest Sunday morning

pulpit meal. Some have tried to flap their wings, to rise above the mundane, as they have seen or heard of other believers soaring on high, enjoying the rich blessings of their Lord as they rise on the wind of the Spirit. They have 'stepped out in faith' or taken a risk, with the frequent result of disappointment and hurt as they come crashing back to earth. Our churches are full of people who find themselves more like the farmyard chicken than the soaring eagle! They are content to cluck-cluck as they peck for grains of blessings amid the smorgasbord of church programs, designed for their benefit. Why does it seem to be so difficult to fly like the eagle if that is God's will for us and the desire of our hearts? Someone has cynically suggested that 'it's hard to fly like an eagle when you're surrounded by turkeys!' but I suggest there are more fundamental reasons.

Some Reasons Many Fail To Fly.

1. They are born 'wounded'.

When we were born again of the Spirit of God, our **spirits** became alive to God, we were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, taken from death to life. We were made new creatures, '*old things passed away, all things became new*'.¹ Theologians call that *justification* - salvation for the spirit - a past work of the Holy Spirit by which we were saved from the penalty of sin.

However, our **bodies** did not suddenly change - they are still dying, one day at a time, and the physical results of sin continue in our bodies. The scars of previous wounds remain, we still need glasses to read, our hair continues to fall out and the gaps in our teeth are not being filled with shiny new enamels. Evidently, our bodies were not 'a new creation'! Praise God, one day they will be made new when *this corruption shall put on incorruption and this mortality will put on immortality*.² We call that *glorification* - salvation for the body - a future work of the Holy Spirit by which we shall be saved from the presence of sin.

Similarly, our **souls** were not instantly healed from the wounds they had suffered; wounds such as rejection, abandonment, verbal and physical assaults leading to inferiority complex, insecurity and fear; wounds often deep within the subconscious. If you are the child of a divorce, you are carrying wounds. If there was sexual intercourse outside of the marriage bonds, you are carrying wounds. If your parents were unable to pour into you the love that is evidenced in security, self esteem, and emotional well-being, you are carrying wounds. Satan knows the many wounds we carry and is quick to aggravate them whenever we attempt to do great things for God. The good news is that there is healing and wholeness found, even for these wounds, in the atoning work of the cross. We call that *sanctification* - salvation for the soul - a present, ongoing work of the Holy Spirit by which we are being saved from the power of sin. Until these wounds are dealt with - in a spiritual way - our 'flying' will be limited. (See my other book *The Key in My Hand*.)

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:17

² 1 Corinthians 15:53

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”³

2. We have made decisions contrary to God’s principles of life.

Many of those decisions have life-long consequences. For example, we are taught not to be *‘unequally yoked with an unbeliever’* but there are many believers who have married non-believing spouses. Though the Lord might have called them to a great destiny in His service, their number one responsibility now is to be a witness to their unbelieving partner. Of course, the Lord may bring the unbelieving partner to Himself, though that is not usual, and both can then learn to fly. He can still use such people even if the partner remains uncommitted, but ‘flying’ is strictly limited and the decision cannot be reversed.

Other decisions can be reversed however, and must be, if one wants to fly like the eagle. Many are *living in debt*, so contrary to God’s word, not realising that they are now serving Mammon, an alien God! I am utterly amazed when I see so many Christian leaders and churches commit themselves to a heavy debt load which, when they become unable to meet the demands of their creditors, brings them into a bondage never intended for them by the Lord. The Lord cannot release them into greatness in His service while they are potentially subject to the demands of their creditors.

Many are carrying *unforgiveness* in their hearts towards others, thereby giving Satan his opportunity, while still more are carrying *offenses and prejudices*. All of these are decisions they have made though they would prefer to blame another. When someone has wronged you, the Lord has promised you grace sufficient to bear that wrong and to forgive. When someone offends you by their actions, personality or words, you can choose not to allow that monkey to sit on your shoulders! If it remains, the offense is yours! Prejudices are those negative attitudes we have to others, usually based on ignorance. Remember, you will never know how another man feels until you have walked some miles in his shoes!

The Lord can still use all these people in ministry but ‘flying’ is limited.

“Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”⁴

3. We have never understood that we should be flying!

We have become so satisfied with the normalcy of our Christian life that we have never questioned if there is something more. We are content to be fed each Sunday by a pulpit message, augmented by some nice ‘worship’ music on our car radio and a serendipity book by the latest Christian celebrity. Surely this is abnormal - subnormal to

³ 1 Thessalonians 5:23

⁴ Hebrews 12:1

the abundant life that the Lord intended for us! We have been so desensitised by the weak, materialistic Christianity of much of the western world, that we can no longer hear our bridegroom say, *Arise my love and come away*⁵. His voice has become the voice of a stranger and the bride has forgotten its sweet tone. She has loved this world too much and its cares and dirt have weighed her down. If one would seek to hear the Lord's voice, to draw close to Him, he is derisively called a 'mystic' (as I once was by a senior pastor!) We no longer care nor expect to hear the Shepherd's voice.

Many of our churches have become places where we go so that we might *feel good*, rather than places to worship God and to learn about His demands upon our lives. We do not like to hear His voice in case it brings conviction. Whenever someone tells me of a 'great' church they attend, I seek to know, non provocatively, what they mean by 'great'. Often they mean that the numbers are up, Jesus is lifted-up, hands are up-in-the-air, the singing is upbeat and sermons are only up to twenty five minutes, on some unchallenging topic! We want to be in a church that is upwardly mobile! I am struck that Evan Roberts, God's instrument in the great Welsh revival of 1904, learned to fly like the eagle by praying, "Lord, bend me down, bend me lower!"

It further seems to me that many of our 'great' churches are such because of the charisma of the leader, not the charismata of the Holy Spirit. The leader would be just as successful in building a business empire as he has been in building his personal church empire. He has learned all the techniques of the business world in controlling those who work for him, and has established a firm 'flow chart' of authority and responsibility. Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, many of our smaller churches remain such because of the insecurity and control of its leader.

Don't push me too hard! I'm happy to just rest here in my nest!

4. We have had our wings clipped so that we should not fly too high!

Many of our leaders have not understood their responsibility to teach their people to fly. Instead, many churches and parachurch organisations are run in a way similar to the systems of the world, where the organisational structure is pyramidal with power emanating from the top downwards and the operative word is *control*. Jesus said "*You are not to be like that!*"⁶ As a pastor, I am greatly challenged that my work is to "*equip the saints for the work of the ministry.*"⁷ i.e.; to teach them to fly! I am called to make disciples, not build bigger nests! - and disciples should fly as God intended them to do. The eagle does not rest until it sees its offspring rise to soar above all the other birds in the vast expanse of the heavens. O that pastors had this desire - to feed, teach and release their people so that each might reach their highest destiny in Christ. Instead, we often see them clip their people's wings so that they do not disturb the comfort of 'their' church. *Whose church is it anyway?*

⁵ Song of Solomon 2:10

⁶ Mark 10:42,43

⁷ Ephesians 4:12

I was at a pastor's home in Australia where my host had invited a number of friends around for an evening of fellowship with his Canadian visitor. He introduced me briefly, asking that I share with his guests anything the Lord might have laid on my heart. I started by enlarging his introduction. "I am a pastor, not currently in charge of a church, but nevertheless one according to Ephesians 4:11, knowing my calling and the ministry the Lord has placed before me." Immediately a middle-aged woman present said, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, "I suppose we are going to get our wings clipped again!" I could only assume that her experience of pastors was that they constantly hindered her in what she considered God's calling on her life to be. I am glad to be able to say that, by the end of the evening, she and I were 'best of mates'! She even had a hearty "Amen" when I finished.

I must add that at that same meeting I met one of those most obnoxious of Christians, the self-appointed "watchman on the wall" whose role in life is to critique everything the pastor or visitor might say, that might be construed to mean something dangerous (according to the watchman) to the saints, - usually something the speaker never intended at all. A good pastor would certainly need to clip those wings!

We have many young people in our churches who have not yet caught the sickness of indolence so common among the older members, and who have dreams and ideas of serving the Lord. "Why don't we start a coffee shop? Can the young people lead the worship one Sunday? Can we hold an open-air meeting? I want to go on a Missions trip with Youth With A Mission or Campus Crusade. Can we plan a barbecue for the street kids with their coloured hair and rings in their noses? Can we form a youth choir, all dressed in rugby tops and blue jeans?" We admire their enthusiasm but are quick to discourage them with a hundred and one excuses. We don't want our 'boat to be rocked'. After all, ours is a respectable church and we've got everything 'under control'. We really don't need any more programs, especially not ones of which the world might take notice, such as suggested above. After all, its the pastor's job to know what programs God wants in His church, isn't it? Isn't it ???

If my opinions expressed above are true, then it is no wonder there are so many believers no longer in good fellowship with a local church due to disillusionment, frustration and wounds.

The burden on my heart is for the *hurting church*, especially for those pastors and missionaries 'on the front lines' who are suffering from wrongs and wounds done against them, usually, and sadly, by other members of *the Body of Christ*. However in my travels, I am coming across more and more disillusioned believers, both clergy and laity, who have lost their joy and purpose in serving the Lord. Many have burned out carrying ministries God never intended for them to bear.