

## ON EAGLES' WINGS

Today I want to look at how Christians are like eagles. But it is interesting to begin by considering some other types of birds that Christians can be like.

Some of us are like chickens. Different to eagles, who soar to great heights, chickens live within the confines of a fence, or cooped up in tiny shelters (e.g. battery hens). They flap around in the chicken yard and when they get upset they hardly get off the ground, clucking and squawking. Some people need to learn to soar, but instead they put out lots of effort flapping around but getting nowhere. When a storm comes, eagles face it, but chickens rush for the henhouse and huddle together with the other chooks. People sometimes go running when a trial comes. Chickens are synonymous with fear. Scared to stand out and be different. Scared of anything new, fearful of everything.

Christians can be like magpies. Those are the ones who are overly aggressive, harsh and pushy, bowl up and say "Do you know the Lord?", drive other people away from God. When he was a small lad, my son used to be scared of magpies who swooped down on him on his way to school. When new people come to services, some Christians swoop down on them and frighten them away.

Christians can be like kookaburras. Life is a big joke – they laugh at everything and aren't ever serious enough or sensitive of others' needs.

And then there are the parrots. They talk and talk, but don't walk the walk! Learn everything parrot fashion but don't really understand what it means deep down inside. Parrot back the answers, but don't put it into practice. Many of us can tend to be like this.

Some Christians are like peacocks. Flashy, showy, full of pride, impressed with themselves. Feel superior to others, love to strut their stuff, but don't get down and help others in need. Legalistic Christians can be like this – self-righteous. We used to be more that way than hopefully we are now.

Others are like pelicans. All they do is eat. They keep feeding off the Church, but never do anything for it. They become spiritually big and fat and lazy, like Laodiceans.

What about the sparrows and finches? They chatter and fritter away incessantly. They hop from church to church without staying and being committed.

The seagulls try to take away the food from the little ones (e.g. at picnics). It's dangerous spiritually to offend the little ones.

Cuckoos are interesting birds which look for another bird's nest, lay their eggs there, and then leave the other birds to raise their babies!

Isn't it interesting—all the types of birds and how we can be like them! Fascinating material we could talk about for ages. But now let's concentrate on the type of bird God says in the Bible we should be, and see why that is, and what we can learn from the eagle.

Isaiah 40:31 “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.”

1. The first thing we note about eagles is that they mount up high in the air, they soar in the heavens. What eagles do is wait for a massive updraft of air and allow it to buoy them upwards on the rising thermal currents.

And so Christians need to wait and respond to the leading of the Spirit of God, which is likened to wind. We need to be carried on the wind currents of God’s Spirit, and we will soar.

Romans 8:14-15 <sup>14</sup> “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.”

Colossians 3:1-2 “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Exodus 19:4 “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.”

We can be like a chicken and flap around wildly, thinking that things are hard and difficult, or we can leave them in God’s hands, trust in the Holy Spirit to guide us, and yield to the Spirit’s working, and cruise and soar in God’s grace, riding the wind of the Spirit.

Psalms 68:19 “Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens.”

2. Another aspect of eagles is their amazing vision.

Job 39:27-29 <sup>27</sup> “Does the eagle soar at your command and build its nest on high? <sup>28</sup> It dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is its stronghold. <sup>29</sup> From there it looks for food; its eyes detect it from afar.”

A great description of the eagle. In verse 29, eagles are thought to have the best eyesight of any bird, and greater vision by far than humans. Apparently, an eagle can see a rabbit from 2 miles. They have large eyes on the side of the head, and the higher they fly, the wider the span of vision, so they spot their prey as they soar high above. That’s why people are called “eagle-eyed.”

And Christians have great spiritual vision, enabled to see heavenly things of which other people have no idea.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 <sup>3</sup> “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

And we need to keep our eyes open.

Proverbs 22:3 “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.”

### 3. They live on the rock!

Job 39:28 <sup>28</sup> “It dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is its stronghold.” So Christians live on the rock who is Christ. “Stays there at night” – in times of spiritual night (trials) we stay with Jesus Christ. “a rocky crag is its stronghold” – Christ is our stronghold.

(KJV of Job 39:28 “He abides on the rock”) (John 15:4 says “Abide in me”)

Isaiah 33:15A, 16, 17 <sup>15</sup> Those who walk righteously and speak what is right...<sup>16</sup> they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them.<sup>17</sup> Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.”

If an eagle gets sick, it spreads itself out on a rock in the sun and sickness is drawn out of it. That’s where the term “spread-eagled” comes from. Good advice! If we are spiritually sick, we ought to come into Jesus Christ’s presence – spread ourselves out on that rock, until we’re well.

4. Eagles are noted as symbols of strength, bravery and courage. They are not scared of storms. All the other birds run for cover when storms approach, but eagles don’t try to avoid them. Here’s a quote from an article about this:

*“Did you know that an eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks? The eagle will fly to some high spot and wait for the winds to come. When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, the eagle is soaring above it. The eagle does not escape the storm. It simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm. When the storms of life come upon us – and all of us will experience them – we can rise above them by setting our minds and our belief toward God. The storms do not have to overcome us. We can allow God’s power to lift us above them. God enables us to ride the winds of the storm that bring sickness, tragedy, failure and disappointment in our lives. We can soar above the storm. Remember, it is not the burdens of life that weigh us down, it is how we handle them. The Bible says, “Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.” (Isaiah 40:31).*

As well as having to face storms, eagles encounter snakes – as we encounter Satan. It’s interesting what eagles do with snakes. They grab them and drop them on a rock so they die. Then they bite their heads off and eat them. So we have authority over Satan – don’t need to fear him, but resist him and drop him on the rock, Jesus Christ!

5. Another interesting thing about eagles is how they train their young. This is described in Deuteronomy 32:10-11 <sup>10</sup> “In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye,<sup>11</sup> like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft.”

To convince the babies that the time has come to leave the nest and become independent, the parent eagles stir up the nest, roughing it up with their claws so it

becomes uncomfortable. Then the mother eagle “flutters over the nest”, hovers over the young, gently pushes them out of the nest so they climb on her back for comfort, hanging on for dear life. Then she takes the little eaglet for a ride. Suddenly she dives downward so the little eagle falls off and hurtles toward the ground.

So for the little eagle, it is time to “fly or die!” But just as all is lost and hopeless, she swoops down below and catches the eaglet on her back. This time it begins to work its wings and stay up, but if necessary, the mother eagle saves it from death again – until it is able to fly on its own, and experience the joy and thrill of soaring in freedom and liberty.

And so God’s Spirit and His truth gives freedom to the Christian to fly free.

John 8:32 “Then you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free.”

Galatians 5:1 “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

The New Covenant gives us freedom from the bonds of the physical law. Rather than serving the law in the letter, we now serve God in the Spirit.

6. Eagles are very swift. The Bible makes a few references to this.

2 Samuel 1:23 “Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.”

Proverbs 23:5 “Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.”

Proverbs 30:18-19 <sup>18</sup> “There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: <sup>19</sup> the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a young woman.”

Amazing marvels of flight, amazing characteristics eagles have, and how they compare with the way Christians should be!

So we as Christians should be swift to follow God, e.g. Psalms 119:60 “I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.”

Psalms 143:9 “Rescue me from my enemies, LORD, for I hide myself in you.” (“I flee unto thee to hide me”)

Revelation 12:14 “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach.”

7. Eagles are long-living.

This is highlighted in Isaiah 40:31 “renew their strength” – “not grow weary.”

Also Psalms 103:5 “who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” – MSG “makes you always young.”

Apparently the eagle preens its feathers by passing each through the mouth, breathing on them and “steam cleaning” them to restore them from the previous day’s activity. They take about an hour a day sitting on a rock and preening each feather in the morning. Interesting analogy! It is good for us to sit on the rock of Jesus Christ every day and have the Holy Spirit breathe on us to refresh and restore us!

A gland in the eagle’s mouth secretes an oily liquid that “waterproofs” its feathers to help it in the rain! Eagles are renowned for their longevity – living 50 years or more; more than any other bird as far as I know.

Galatians 6:9 shows what Christians should be like. “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

2 Corinthians 4:16 “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

Colossians 3:10 “and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

And we know that spiritual eagles will receive the ultimate in renewal and longevity – we will have **Eternal Life**!

I hope it has been interesting to look at eagles today. Let’s be sure that instead of clucking around like scared chickens, we Christians soar like eagles on the winds of God’s Spirit!



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