

SBPU Theme: Trusting God to Soar in 2024



Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

THE MEANING OF ISAIAH 40:31

There is an incredible promise in this verse and three powerful images of what this promise looks like. To help you better understand the meaning of Isaiah 40:31 I want to take a look at each of these promises and see how it applies to our lives today.

BUT THOSE WHO HOPE IN THE LORD WILL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH MEANING

“Those who hope in the Lord” can also be translated as “those who wait upon the Lord.” Either way the message of this verse is the same

It was said, “This expression [“those who wait for the Lord”] implies two things: complete dependence on God and a willingness to allow him to decide the terms.”

Remember the context, Israel is facing all sorts of hardships, and they are struggling to trust God through it all. Isaiah is encouraging his readers to wait on God, to place their hope in him. Things might be difficult, but God will come through.

The message here is that when we place our complete trust in God he will sustain us, our strength will be renewed.

Isaiah isn't done yet; next he gives us three powerful images to help us better understand what this means.

THEY WILL SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES MEANING

Eagles are known for their strength and ability to soar above the clouds and through the storms; they are powerful creatures. In ancient culture eagles were revered as mighty and courageous warriors who would fight for their young. Isaiah is comparing this majestic and noble creature to those who remain faithful to God. To soar, or mount up, on wings like eagles means that God will bring his people through the storms they are facing.

This is an incredible image of what God's people have to look forward to. God will not only renew their strength, but he will bring them through all the obstacles they are facing. They will soar like eagles. All God's people need to do is trust in him.

THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW WEARY MEANING

Isaiah isn't done painting this incredible picture. For those who place their hope in the Lord they will run and not grow weary.

Whenever you run you eventually will grow weary. It doesn't matter how good of shape you are in, at some point you will become tired and unable to continue on. What Isaiah is saying is that for God's people they will not grow weary. Now, he's not talking about running a race. Rather he's promising that God will give them the strength they need to sustain them through the trials they are facing.

THEY WILL WALK AND NOT BE FAINT MEANING

For forty years God's people wandered in the desert. They walked and walked and walked. Despite all the wandering God not only provided for them, he sustained them. They walked and did not faint.

Isaiah is telling his readers that they too can experience God's power at work in their life. Just as God delivered their ancestors he can, and will, deliver them too.

If they remain faithful and wait on God they will soar like eagles, run and not grow weary, and walk and not be faint.

So how does the meaning of Isaiah 40:31 apply to our lives today?

While this verse was written to the nation of Israel who were facing difficult hardships, the same principles apply to us today. Our call is still to place our hope in, and wait on, God. Whatever we are facing we are called to trust in God, and he will sustain us.

The promise of Isaiah 40:31 is found all throughout the New Testament. In Ephesians 3:20 Paul tells his readers that God's power is at work in us. In James 1:12 we see that great is the reward for those who trust in God through trials. And in Hebrews 12:2 we are told to run the race with perseverance.

Just as God provided for the nation of Israel God still provides for his people today. And the message of the Bible is clear, trust in him. There will be dark days and tough trials, but for those who place their hope in the Lord and wait upon him, he will lead them through. God's people will soar on wings like eagles.

Soar like an eagle

God has been preparing pastors for 2024 as a year of soaring to greater heights than ever before spiritually, physically, psychologically, relationally, financially, and in terms of life purpose.

But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall soar on wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31)

Many people have shared similar analogies about this year being one of great achievements, self-discovery, and growth for many like never before. Now, this could be shrugged off by a cynic as the optimism of starting a new year and a new decade. And that's fair; it's understandably much easier to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in the face of perceived new beginnings and a calendrical reboot of sorts. However, time inevitably weeds out the halfhearted. Now that we are looking at January and half of February in our rear view mirror (already!), I think it's safe to say that this personal growth and enhancement will only become a reality for the people who continue to put in the healthy daily habits that will, over the course of time, lead to inner and outward transformation. To gain a better understanding of what it means to soar like an eagle, I researched fun facts about eagles. Here is what I found:

- The word “eagle” was derived from the Latin word “aquila” by way of the French word “aigle” (which makes me think of the English word “agile,” able to move quickly and easily).
- Eagles are considered the king of birds and are at the top of the food chain in the avian world. They are incredibly strong and powerful and have very long lifespans.
- The eagle symbolizes power, freedom, and transcendence.
- Eagles fly i) to very great heights, ii) over long distances, and iii) alone (i.e. are generally solitary).
- Eagles have very acute vision that is over three times that of humans' and this keen eyesight helps them to be very observant of their surroundings.
- They eat only meat and do not need to eat every day.
- Most birds of prey have the habit of glancing over their shoulder just in case another predator is behind them. Not eagles, who are obviously confident enough that nothing would dare to attack them. (#Boss)

To soar:

1. To maintain height in the air without flapping wings or using engine power [Oxford]
2. To rise or increase dramatically (as in position, value, or price) [Merriam-Webster]
3. To rise very quickly to a high level [Cambridge]

While the second and third definitions speak to a rapid rise to a great height, the first definition in particular caught interest because it speaks to maintaining such height without expending much energy. This phenomenon is further explained in an article I read which stated:

Some eagles, such as the martial eagle, are capable of soaring for long hours without a single wing beat. They use thermals (columns of hot rising air) to do that”

This elaboration makes it clear that soaring is not the same as inactivity; rather, it is an intentional, strategic mechanism that harnesses accumulated momentum and internal mechanisms to sustain a great height while conserving energy. In other words, soaring is a strategy for energy efficiency and sustainability once one is at a great height.

So how do we go about maintaining great heights of well-being and growth? How do we even *get* to those great heights in the first place? Isaiah 40:31 says our strategy needs to be waiting on God rather than concocting our own plan and expending all of our limited energy and resources to “hustle,” “grind,” and “make it to the top.” Eagles are able to soar and glide with minimal energy expended because they can work with the wind under their wings and let it carry them, which in turn allows them to stay at great heights for longer periods of time than any other bird. Similarly, we should learn to be in alignment with God and go with His flow. We should learn to let Him carry us higher and for longer.

But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall soar on wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31)

This isn't the conventional wisdom you typically hear. No one says, “You have to rest your way to the top!” And don't get me wrong, there will be hard work and effort to grow or reach greater heights of well-being and destiny. But in God's way of doing life, you don't get there by striving; you get there by waiting on and resting in God.

It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy (Romans 9:16).

Remain in life-union with me as I remain in life-union with you. For as a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to mine (John 15:4).

Drawing strength from God requires us to relax in Him and trust that He knows what He's doing. It requires that we trust His word, His ability, and His character. And if we're on board with His plan for our lives as opposed to doing our own thing, we don't have to worry about sustaining or implementing it; it's *His* plan, so He'll bring along *His* resources and *He'll* do the implementation. And whatever small part He gives us to play in that, He'll give us the grace to do. Oftentimes, as I feel is the case in this season, the work He wants us to do is *waiting* on Him, *spending time* with Him, and *resting* in Him. That is how we get energized. That is how we can follow through consistently with the practices that will grow us into the higher beings we are called to be.

8 Steps to Knowing God's Will For Your Life

- Walk with God. ...
- Surrender your will to God's. ...
- Obey what you already know to be God's Will. ...
 - Seek godly input. ...
- Pay attention to how God has wired you. ...
 - Listen to God's Spirit. ...
 - Listen to your heart. ...
- Take a look at your circumstances.

How to grow in spirit with God?

Seven Steps to Spiritual Growth

1. Make spiritual growth a commitment and priority. ...
2. Spend time with God. ...
3. Live in the Word. ...
4. Pray in faith. ...
5. Have fun with other Christians. ...
6. Lead the lost to Christ. ...
7. Minister to others.

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Thank you for your service.

Amen!