

CREATED TO SOAR

Just in the past few weeks 2 of the richest men on the planet have flown to the edge of space in rockets – a distance of 80 to 100 kilometers above the earth. There they both experienced 3 to 4 minutes of weightlessness, free from the pull of gravity. Both Branson and Bezos said this has always been their dream. Now their goal is to make it possible for others to have the same experience. The majority of us never will, but those who are God’s children can live in those heavenly places and enjoy freedom through the Lord Jesus Christ – not just for a few minutes in our life time, but every day.

The title of my message this morning is ‘Created to Soar’. We are going to look at a passage in Isaiah 40. Many of us are probably familiar with a few of the verses at the end of the chapter, but I would like us to read from v26 to the end.

READING: Isaiah 40:26-31

These are God’s words, spoken by the prophet Isaiah, to give his people hope. They were going through a time of suffering and facing great difficulties and injustice. Some of you may be facing challenges too - family issues, financial struggles or problems with health.

The word that God spoke to his people then, to give them hope and to lift them up, is just as relevant today as it was then – and this is the word that God has put in my heart to share with you.

So God begins by saying: REMEMBER WHO I AM!

1. REMEMBER – who He is

v28 “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.”

God’s people felt that he wasn’t taking any notice of their situation and not answering their cries for help. They were saying, “My cause is disregarded by my God.” So God says to them:

Remember: “I am the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. I never grow tired or weary.”

If you read the entire chapter, chapter 40 in Isaiah – it speaks of God’s power and strength.

- He says that no-one or nothing can compare with who he is.
- And he goes on by saying to them “I have not changed – I never grow weary or tired.”
- His power and strength never change.
- The God who created the world thousands of years ago, has the same power and strength today!

The people also felt that God didn’t see their situation. They were saying ‘My way is hidden from the Lord.’ But he says to them:

Remember: “My understanding no-one can fathom.”

- Earlier in chapter 40 he says “Who has understood the mind of the Lord, or who has instructed him as his counsellor.”
- God has complete understanding, great wisdom and insight, he has perfect discernment and is the greatest intelligence in the universe. He sees the past, present and the future. He sees what is in our hearts, he sees what is in the hearts of those around us. He sees every situation in a way we simply cannot.
- Probably all of us believe these things – we believe God is all powerful and that he sees and knows all things. Yet at times we struggle to truly believe that he cares about OUR situation. It’s easy to remember our failures, rather than who God is.

The amazing thing is, that this awesome God, does care about you and me. In the same chapter in Isaiah it says:

Isaiah 40:11 “He tends his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.”

So the first thing God says to us is REMEMBER WHO I AM. Then he gives each one of us an invitation – an invitation to receive from him what we lack.

2. RECEIVE – from Him

v29 “He gives strength to the weary and he increases the power of the one who is weak.

v30 “Even youth grow tired ... and young men stumble and fall.”

- God understands our frailty. He knows our struggles and that at times we may fail.
- He says, even youths or teenagers, who have boundless energy, and young men and women who are in their 20’s and in the prime of their lives, they grow tired.
- Whatever physical age we are, however long we have been a believer, we can go through tough times and our spiritual stamina, our faith can really be tested.
- We don’t need to feel condemned. God understands our weakness.
- He is inviting us to receive strength and power from him. This is not a one off invitation, but rather any invitation to come whenever we realize we have a need.

How do we receive?

V31 “But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”

HOPE

- The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language. Often the meaning of words have a depth of meaning we don’t see in English.
- The word hope is often translated as wait, but what it really means is to ‘wait expectantly, or look to the Lord with expectation and hope in him.’

When you come to the Lord with expectation he will renew your strength.

RENEW

- Again this is a word full of meaning. It speaks of an exchange.
- God doesn't just want to top up our strength, like we top up our phones when the credit is low, or recharge our batteries.
- No, he wants to exchange our weakness, our weariness, despair, discouragement – for his strength, his power, hope and courage. It's a supernatural exchange.

Remember those wonderful words of Jesus: **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”**

EXAMPLE OF AN EAGLE

To help us understand how we are to receive and what God has for us, he gives the example of an eagle.

v31 “They will soar on wings like an eagle.”

The eagle is a majestic bird - the King of the birds. Did you know that the largest eagle ever known used to live in the South Island of New Zealand? It was the Haast eagle, but is sadly now extinct. There are eagles in many parts of the world, and you will also find them in Israel. The Bible often mentions eagles.

An eagle doesn't flap its' wings to fly. In fact the wings of an eagle are heavy – and if they had to flap their wings to fly they would use so much energy they could even die. So they learn to wait for the wind currents, or wind thermals. They wait high up on a rock in the sun. They may wait for days to catch a wind thermal or wind current, and when it does, it is caught up by the wind and can soar high into the sky.

This is a picture of what God wants to do in our lives. When we are weary, we are to come to the One who is our Rock, to the Lord, and wait, to come with expectancy, that we will receive from him – then allow the Holy Spirit to fill us afresh and meet the needs in our heart, so we will be carried along by the wind of the Spirit, and not struggle in our own strength and flesh.

Three keys to help us receive

1. Be still

Most of us find this difficult. Our lives are busy and we live in a world surrounded by noise and activity. The TV is on, our cell phones beep with new messages – we are so easily distracted.

- But the Word of God tells us to be still – “Be still and know that I am God.”
- That stillness is something within.
- I find though it usually helps if I am in an environment where it is quiet and sometimes we have to create those quiet moments. If we can't find a room in the house to be alone, we could go for a walk or use the time when we are driving the car by ourselves.
- But to be still within means we quieten our thoughts and begin to focus on the Lord, so we can receive from him and hear his voice.

2. Wait

Then we are to wait with expectancy and hope that God will do exactly what he has promised.

- Often we need to release our burdens to the Lord first, and then come in faith.

3. Receive

God wants to meet us at our place of need.

- Sometimes God gives us a deep sense of his peace, assuring us that he is in control of the situation we are facing.
- Sometimes he gives us an awareness of his love.
- He also wants to speak to us in those moments.
- Each one of us who knows the Lord and belongs to him can cultivate the ability to hear that quiet inner voice. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." He lives within you – and he speaks from within you. He speaks into your heart. As you grow in your relationship with the Lord, you will become more skilled at hearing his voice.
- Other times when we come before the Lord to receive, we may not feel or hear him say anything, but we simply receive his strength by faith.

God wants to renew our strength, to fill us afresh daily with his Spirit – so we can soar like an eagle.

3. RENEWED – to soar

Let's read Isaiah 40:31 again: **"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 faint."**

This is what God has called us to do. We are called to soar.

a. Called to Soar

A story

There is a story of a farmer who found a baby eagle, an eaglet that has fallen from a nest. He took it back to his farm and put it with the chickens. So as baby eagle grew it followed the chickens – and simply lived on the ground as they do. One day the farmer's friend came to visit and he was shocked to see the eagle with the chickens. "Eagles were made to soar." So he took the eagle to roof of the barn and let it fall, hoping it would use its' wings. It didn't! The young eagle fell just like a chicken would. So he decided to take the eagle to a higher place. He put it in his truck and drove into the mountains. Then he got out on the edge of a cliff and hurled the bird over the side. Suddenly the young eagle realized it would perish if it didn't use its' wings, and so it stretched out its' wings - and discovered how exciting, exhilarating it was to fly.

The eagle

Although an eagle is created to soar into the heavens, the mother bird sometimes has to make her chicks uncomfortable in the nest, so they will launch out. Usually eagles build their nests high in the mountains on a rocky ledge. They build the nest out of branches and thorns, and gradually as the mother bird sits in the nest it becomes lined with feathers. If the chicks refuse to leave the nest when they are ready to fly, the mother bird will pull out the feathers to make it uncomfortable, so the young birds will want to move. If they still refuse the mother will then flap her wings over the nest until they do!

This is what God does with his children. It refers to this in Deuteronomy 32:11. **“Like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young.”**

God wants us to soar, to fulfil our calling, but so often we are comfortable the way we are. He allows us to get into uncomfortable situations, not to harm us – but so our faith will grow and we will learn to become who we are called to be. We don’t always understand the things that happen in our lives, but we have the assurance that God is with us. He won’t let us fall.

He promises in Psalm 37: **“Though he stumble, he will not fall for the Lord will uphold him with his hand.”**

You have been called to soar. God at work in our lives, using the trials and difficulties that are part of living here on earth, so we learn to use our wings of faith and grow stronger.

b. Soar through storms

Most birds flee or hide from storms, but an eagle doesn’t. In fact it can sense a storm coming, and rather than hide, it flies into the storm. It uses the wind currents from the storm to enable it to fly higher. As it starts to glide through the storm its wings are locked into position so that it can fly right through the storm clouds. The eagle knows that above the storm clouds it will be safe.

1 Peter 1:7 speaks of the trials and storms we go through and he says: **“These have come so your faith, which is of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”**

Those of us who have been on this journey longer can assure those who are beginning, that God’s word is true. The trials and challenges have strengthened our faith.

If you are going through a storm right now, I encourage you to lock your wings of faith into position – hold on – keep your eyes on Jesus – and he will bring you out into a safe place.

c. Soar in Heavenly places

We are called to soar, to live in heavenly places – this is our position in Christ.

Ephesians 2:6 **“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.”**

And it is in this place where we experience God’s blessing:

Ephesians 1:3 **“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the spiritual realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”**

Although our true position in Christ is to live in heavenly places, the reality is we don’t always live from this place. Often we are more like chickens flapping our wings and pecking at the ground. However God has given us this wonderful invitation to come and receive his strength – and every time we feel weak, or we fail, we can come again and receive from him.

When we live from that place in the heavenly realm, we will see things more from God's perspective.

The Eagle

The eagle has better vision than any other creature. In fact its vision is 4 to 8 times stronger than a human beings. Our range of vision is about 150 degrees, but an eagles is 340 degrees. They truly have a bird's eye view of the earth.

- We are to be like an eagle – to live in heavenly places, and from that place we will begin to have greater understanding of who God is.
- We will see people and situations more and more from God's perspective, rather than our own self orientated viewpoint.
- But we will also see more clearly what the enemy is up to and be more effective at coming against his plans and strategies.
- Although the eagle flies higher than other birds and is at the top of the food chain, other birds will often try and harass it.
- In our lives, we have an enemy who seeks to harass us too. This is especially true if we are living from that spiritual dimension, and walking in the Spirit. The enemy wants to bring us down. As we learn to stay in that place in the heavenly realms we will see more clearly what the enemy is doing. Then we will be effective to ward off his attacks and pray for others too.

Conclusion

Some men and women in the future will be able to take rockets to the edge of space and experience freedom from the pull of gravity for a moment in time. However those of us who belong to the Lord and have been born again by the Spirit of God, have the capacity to soar into the heavenly realms, to see things from God's perspective, and to walk in a freedom that only he can give. When we are weak, he promises to exchange our weakness for his strength, so we can run and not grow weary. We are called to be like an eagle.