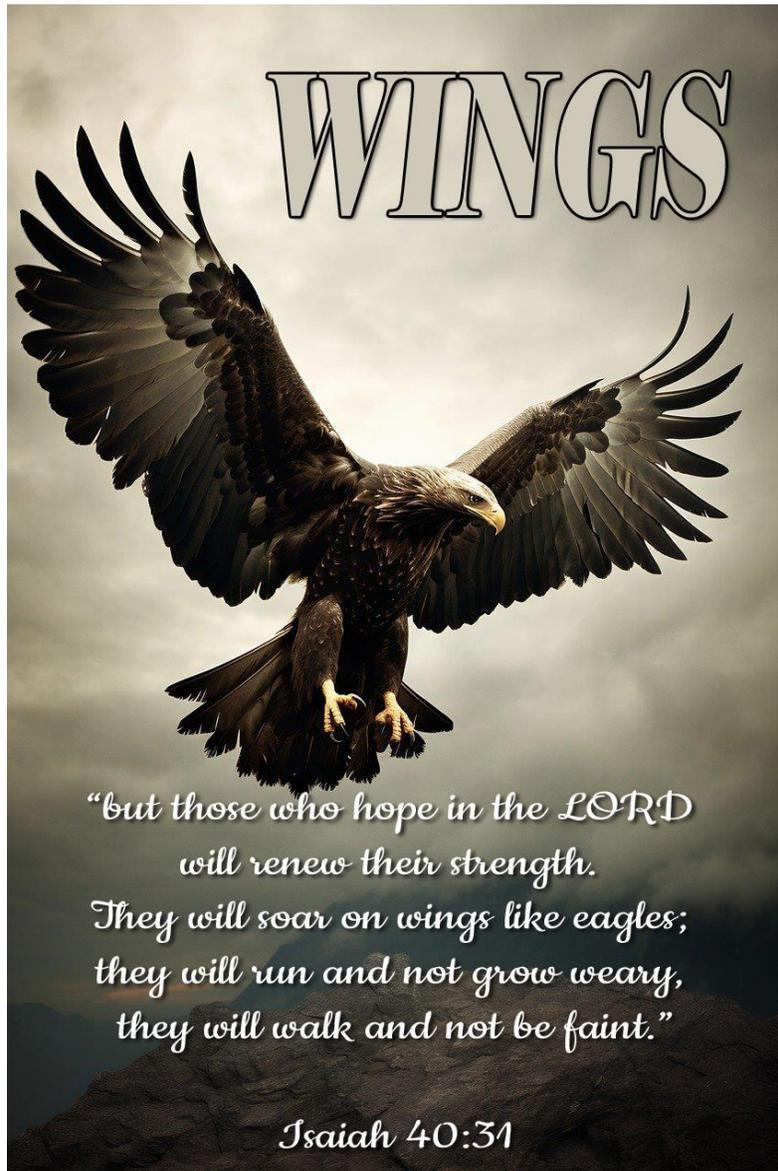


## WINGS

“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.”

Isaiah 40:31



Special Music: Eagle’s Wings

Hillsong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKyPqigDt3k>

## FLYING

It was early January, but the afternoon was a pleasant 68 degrees with only a few clouds in the sky that failed to obscure the sun. Kids of all ages gathered in the park since school wouldn't start for another few days. Adam Noble was bored and had come to the park to see if any of his friends might be hanging out there, but most of the children were younger. Older kids, like Adam, preferred to be around friends of their own age. Thinking that they might be hanging out at the creek or around the train depot, Adam started to leave to search for them.

Only then did he see someone lying on his back in the grass looking up at the statue known to the locals as Peacemaker. The statue was a little over 12 feet tall and conical in shape. At the top was a globe of the earth, cast in bronze, resting under the wings of a large stainless-steel eagle. It was a tribute to the town's residents who had served in World War II and was quite beautiful as the sunlight reflected off the bronze and steel surfaces. The eagle had a fierce, protective presence, constantly vigilant.

As Adam approached the statue, he could see that the person lying on the grass was none other than Bobby Henderson, the mayor's son. They were both high-school seniors but didn't usually run in the same circles at school. Adam only knew Bobby casually. He could see that Bobby had positioned himself so that the globe and the eagle on the statue came between him and the sun, making the top of the statue a silhouette against the sky. The young man seemed to be deep in thought, and Adam almost turned around to go search for his friends without bothering him. But curiosity got the best of him.

**“Whatcha looking at, Bobby?” Adam asked him casually.**

**“The eagle,” said Bobby without taking his eyes off the statue.**

**“The eagle?” queried Adam. “This statue has been here a long time. Why are you suddenly interested in the eagle?”**

**“I’m just... I’m just thinking.”**

**“Thinking about what?” asked Adam.**

**“Thinking about the eagle,” said Bobby. “You should try it.”**

**“I have better things to do than lie around thinking about a statue. You enjoy your time with the eagle. I’m going to see who’s out and about over at the train station.”**

**“Have a great day,” said Bobby without ever looking in Adam’s direction. He seemed so intense. There had to be more going on here than Bobby realized.**

**“On second thought, why don’t you tell me what you are thinking about when you are looking at that eagle?”**

**“Tell you what,” said Bobby, “why don’t you lay down here and look yourself?”**

**“What? Don’t be silly. I have important things to do,” Adam lied as teenagers are prone to do when they feel they are being manipulated.**

**“Suit yourself, Adam,” said Bobby.**

**“How did you know it was me? You haven’t looked at me once.”**

**“I know your voice, Adam. We’ve been in the same classes since 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Come on, take a load off. Let me know if you see what I see.”**

**“Well, okay, but just for a few minutes.”**

**Adam lay down in the cool grass near Bobby and put the statue between him and the sun as well. It created a halo effect around the statue that gave it an almost supernatural appearance.**

**“Now tell me what you see,” said Bobby.**

**“Sorry, Bobby. I just see the statue. Nothing special about it.”**

**“Look at the eagle. Do you notice anything?”**

**“Nope, just looks like an eagle. Same as always,” said Adam.**

**“Think about it, Adam. That eagle sits up there on the top of that statue, always looking like it is ready to fly. It looks like it could take to the sky at any moment. But it doesn’t. And it never will. Why do you suppose that is, Adam.”**

**“It’s just a part of the statue, Bobby. It’s just metal. It isn’t alive. It’s attached and can’t fly, even if it wanted to. It will never fly.”**

**“Well, you are right about that, Adam. But doesn’t it look like it wants to? Like it’s begging to take off. Like it is meant to fly. But it can’t. That seems so unfair!”**

**Bobby was starting to feel like he was being pulled into a Twilight Zone episode. “You are losing me here, buddy. It’s just a part of a statue. It was never meant to fly,” said Adam. “It’s not alive, Bobby.”**

**“Listen, Adam. That eagle reminds me of me. I feel like I am supposed to fly. That I was meant to fly. I want to make something of my life. But I am stuck like that eagle. Unable to take off. We’re going to graduate this year, but I have no idea how I am supposed to go about... flying. For sure, I am headed to A & M when I graduate, but I’m not sure why. I feel stuck, like nothing I do or say will get me unstuck. Don’t you ever think about things like that?”**

**This conversation had gone in a direction that Adam had never anticipated. He was set to go to Tarlton State, himself. Both his mother and dad had graduated from there. It was kind of expected that he would go. He was planning to major in geology, but it wasn’t written in stone. Like Bobby, he didn’t really have a clear vision of what was ahead for him. He was just going through the motions, never expecting to take off and fly. What did that even mean? He was beginning to see what Bobby was seeing in the eagle. He was starting to get a new perspective.**

**“Hey, listen Adam. I think you may be on to something. I’m beginning to see what you see. You’re right. I do not want to be stuck like that eagle. I need to rethink things. Tell you what, why don’t you let me buy you a shake over at Daisy’s and we can talk about this some more.”**

**“You’re on, Adam,” said Bobby, realizing that he had found a kindred spirit. “I was beginning to think I was going crazy and that no one could see what I saw.”**

**And with that, the boys got up and headed over to Daisy's to contemplate the possibilities of flight rather than the nature of being stuck.**

**“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.”**

**One of the most difficult things for us to learn as Christians is the art of letting go, of leaning into Jesus for our strength and guidance rather than relying on our own resources. When we first step into a relationship with Christ, we are gung ho, ready to take on the world and change it for the better. And we intend to do that with our own resources. The problem with that is we are so excited about serving God, that we don't take time to fill our tanks with spiritual fuel, and we don't bother to ask for directions. We just head out on our own. And it doesn't take long for us to get discouraged or become exhausted. When we first enter into that relationship with Christ, nobody tells us anything different, and we truly believe we are doing the right thing. We have come to an understanding of what Jesus has done for us and we want to try and pay him back by doing all kinds of things that Christians are supposed to do. But in the end, we fail. And we wonder why God let us down. After all, we did everything we were supposed to do, at least what we thought we were supposed to do. We run around like chickens with our heads cut off thinking that we are making progress, moving the Kingdom forward, simply because we are able to keep on running. But running around directionless serves no purpose and we will eventually run out of steam without ever discovering our purpose much less accomplishing it. But, Hallelujah! Don't we look great running around for Jesus, even though we don't seem to bear any fruit? We look like we are accomplishing a lot, but we are stuck**

on the top of a statue going nowhere. We are all dressed up, ready to go, spending all of our time trying to figure out things on our own.

And those of us who have been Christians for a while, laugh and smile at all the chickens running around, without ever accepting responsibility for the absurdness of it all, never even considering that it might be our fault. God uses us to bring people to his throne and share the Good News with all the chickens, we dunk them in the water trough, and hand them a thousand page book translated into a version that meets our needs, chop off their heads and say, “How wonderful it is that you are now a Christian. Good luck with that.” We don’t give them directions, we don’t pray with them, we don’t teach them, we don’t lead them, we don’t show them. But we sure find ways to keep them busy without accomplishing anything. In other words, we are responsible for getting them stuck and we do little to help them get unstuck. And many of us are stuck ourselves and don’t even realize it. When young Christians see us stuck, they think that is how it should be because they don’t know any better. And we cluck our tongues at all the wasted potential. We wonder why they leave the body of Christ behind and never look back. We don’t associate their drifting away with our own failure to teach them. We just mutter, “what a shame.” We are more than happy to tell them that they can soar on the wings of eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint, but we don’t get around to telling them **“but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.”** We don’t tell them, scratch that, we don’t show them that it is the LORD that provides their strength

and direction. And that is because we don't rely on God ourselves as an example of what it means to live a Christian life.

Living a Christian life is not about doing good deeds. It's not about saving souls. It's not about feeding the hungry or taking care of the helpless. Those are the results, the fruit, of living a Christian life. No. Living a Christian life is about one thing only: being a follower of Jesus Christ. It is our hope in our Lord that gives us strength and direction, not the other way around. We don't do good things and expect a reward. No. We submit to Christ with no expectation of reward. We already have our reward. Christ paid the price for our salvation in advance. We are foolish to work towards something that is already paid for. Our joy is in our service because our debt has already been paid. Our fruits are visible through our service because the sacrifice has already been made. And all the glory of our service goes to Jesus Christ, not ourselves.

And yet, we sit like that eagle on the statue, clinging to our original foundation instead of taking flight. Stuck where we are. Failing to take the breath of God under our wings so that we can fly.

Often, it is fear that holds us in place. We don't believe that we can fly. The baby birds in a nest don't believe they can fly either, which is why their parents have to push them out of the nest. If they don't leave the nest, they will never learn to fly and they will eventually starve. Christians are the same way. We have to find a way to draw closer to God with each passing day so that we can leave the nest and show others how to live. If we don't mature in Christ, if we don't

produce fruit, if we don't embrace the spirit, if we don't take flight, we too, will die spiritually and revert back to our old ways.

God made us to soar. Not to sit forever in one place, satisfied and comfortable, waiting for the inevitable. If we want the rewards of the promise, if we want to soar on the wings of eagles, if we want to run and not grow weary, if we want to walk and not be faint, then we have to hope in the Lord to renew our strength. And if we want others to also engage with that same promise, we must teach them to draw their strength from the Lord as well. And we do that by being an example that always points to our loving and nurturing God, who is limitless in Grace, Love, Mercy, and strength.

**“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.”**

God sees the potential in all of us. He created that potential in us. My prayer is that you find the courage to take flight, knowing that God will provide you with everything you need to fulfill his purpose for you.

God bless you all!

AMEN

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