

FROM PET PARROTS TO EAGLES

by Stuart Gramenz

There have been many Christians inspired and yet intrigued by the following scripture.

But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31

As a result there have been books written about how Christians are to be eagles and countless sermons exhorting us to soar. Many believers have been taught only one aspect of waiting upon the Lord.

They have prayed to receive this supernatural lift. They waited...and waited...and waited... with little or no results. After all the prayer, they are still weary and they feel their strength is not renewed. Soaring like an eagle seems to be achieved by only a handful of believers with the majority flapping about, seemingly grounded. If we know it's God's will for us to be eagles, why is it that we are not taking off? In this scripture, the word "wait" means to become one with the Lord.

Jesus said, ***"I and My Father are one."*** (*John 10:30*). This does not necessarily involve a "touchy feely" presence. We become one with Him when we become of one mind with Him. How then is this achieved?

JESUS THE EAGLE

Jesus is our model of how we are to achieve an eagle lifestyle. He didn't continually pray and wait for God to do everything for Him. He wasn't waiting for the Father to inject Him with some extra supernatural energy. He had already received the power of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of His ministry. Potential power wasn't the issue...unlocking and releasing that power was.

What happened with Jesus when He waited upon the Lord?

In a restaurant, a waiter waits! They wait for an order from the person they are serving. Without the order they are ineffective and are unable to do their job. Once the order is given to them they are empowered to carry out the request. Jesus waited upon His Father and listened for His orders. Knowing what was in His Father's mind, He became one with Him.

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. So whatever I say is just what the Father told me to say."
John 12:49-50, NIV

"...I tell you in truth, the Son can do nothing by himself, he can only do what he sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does, the Son also does..."
John 5:19, NIV

Faith comes by hearing a "rhema" or a live word from the Lord. When God spoke direct rhema words to Jesus, it empowered Him with the authority and faith to carry

out the orders given. Day-by-day, or moment-by-moment He would be seeded by God to rise up and preach the gospel, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons. Each faith order enabled Him to renew or exchange His strength for God's, or, in other words, to release the power of the Spirit. He was revitalized, relying on God's seed words for strength as He soared from one person to the next. His vision was to carry out the will of the Father. He didn't know what He was doing from one day to the next and was totally dependent on the Lord for His instructions (James 4:13-14). The Spirit of the Lord became the wind beneath His wings.

The Message says:

“You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but have no idea where it comes from or where it’s headed next. That’s the way it is with everyone born from above by the wind of God, the Spirit of God.”
John 3:8

Every ‘born from above’ believer, can be led and lifted just as Jesus was. Those who desire to be eagles will need to have the confidence and/or trust that Jesus wants them to do what He did.

His prayer was that all believers could reach this level of maturity whereby ***“they may be one just as We are one.”*** But the purpose of this oneness was more far-reaching than simply being made righteous, for this Scripture goes on to say ***“...that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:21-22)***. The ongoing powerful effects of being of one mind with the Lord would grab the world’s attention.

WHAT ABOUT US?

The early church realized they were destined to become one with Him; to be lifted by the wind of the Holy Spirit and fly just as Jesus did. They simply believed what He had told them.

“Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in the works that I do will he do also and greater works than these will he do.”
John 14:12

They imitated the Lord and waited upon Him, and were so empowered through His instructions they turned the world upside down.

However, throughout the Dark Ages, the truth was plucked from the church feather-by-feather until the church became grounded. Eventually the idea that leaders, let alone followers, could duplicate the works of Jesus was considered as feasible as flying to the moon.

Restoration began with the likes of Martin Luther, and then the truths of water baptism and baptism in the Holy Spirit were added. Many other quills of truth have emerged and today we can say the church is covered with many theological feathers. But even with all this new plumage of restored knowledge, many believers have not been able to soar.

PET PARROTS

As a result some church goers have felt more like pet parrots than eagles. As we know, the owners of pet parrots gain great pleasure out of hand feeding them and showing them to others. As a result of being caged, they are confined in their activities and, because they can't enjoy the natural pleasure of flying, other things are

placed in the cage to keep them amused. They are also trained to talk, but can only repeat what their owner teaches them to say.

Those believers who feel like pet parrots are usually provided with all the care and counseling they need. They are hand-fed with well-prepared, spiritual food every week. As a result they know their bible, can repeat scriptures, but still can't fly and soar. They are occupied with weekly meetings, instead of meeting with the Lord and meeting the needs of others.

In some cases their captivity is not a physical but a mental mindset. They have been convinced that, basically, as long as they attend every week, don't peck at the others and come along for the ongoing hand-feeding program, they are fulfilling their role. However, even with all the counseling, care and bible knowledge, they become dissatisfied. They go out for altar calls...but nothing alters. In their hearts they know that something is missing. For many, that frustration finally leads to a sense of pessimism. Their only hope of soaring is on the day they die, when they will get their heavenly wings and fly to that great aviary in the sky.

THE ONE WINGED PARROT

There is a second group of believers who, although they feel partially released, still sense they fit in the parrot category. Some pet owners keep their parrots permanently caged, but others, realizing the birds need greater freedom, allow them out. Complete liberty is, however, not an option and to stop them from leaving the house, the owners continually clip the feathers on one wing. This allows a degree of freedom but, as the bird attempts to fly, it can only flutter around in circles.

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, he gives freedom.
2 Cor. 3:17, NLT*

There have been some believers who have been equipped for the work of their ministry to some degree. They have been trained to move in the gifts of the Spirit, pray for the sick, but are basically confined to "in house" programs. Even with the restoration of home churches, most of the ministry takes place in the meeting. Those who sense they have a limited element of freedom will gain a degree of satisfaction. Finally, after ministering "in house" year after year, they can feel they are going around in circles and end up dizzy and exhausted.

Jesus, our eagle model, did not confine His ministry to a weekly meeting. His gifts and power were released as He went about doing good and healing all.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP VISION

Because they purchased them, parrot owners have control over the future of their pet. Some spiritual leaders have seen believers as "their people" and have a planned vision for them to help build the leader's church. God has paid a high price for **all** believers. He is the only owner and He has a specific purpose for each one. The Lord has given a vision to all leaders...to equip believers to become Jesus imitators and to be led by Him (Eph. 4:11-13).

This will need the impartation of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, not just the one leader struggling to fully equip believers. Having an equipping team will also help remove the old traditional "my people" syndrome.

Unfortunately in the past, some in traditional church leadership have concentrated on their vision of "in house" ministry and have not received the revelation of the

present “eagle truths”. Reaching the lost is advocated but having as many people as possible attend services or home church meetings has been the basic intention.

EAGLE CHURCHES

In the emerging “eagle church”, having a huge aviary is not the goal. The future leaders who truly want to imitate Jesus just want to see their fledglings soar. How do they do this?

In the natural, eagles provide two essential chick-rearing principles.

First of all, they do provide an initial environment of protection and care. They also provide fresh food (for a period of time) until the eaglets are ready to fly (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Secondly, they are examples of what it is to be an eagle. The babies learn through observation of their parents what their future holds for them. They have no doubt that they are destined to soar, search for their own food and provide for their own family one day.

Jesus was the ultimate example of the eagle parent. He fed his fledglings fresh spiritual food daily. He demonstrated how to wait upon the Father – a waiting which enabled Him to rise to the occasion. He told them that they were expected to do what He did (John 14:12).

After modeling and feeding for some time, He gave them an opportunity to practice, using both specific and general orders. As He was walking on water, He demonstrated that Peter also could imitate Him by obeying a specific order, “Come!” He also sent them out on practice flights with a general command to preach the gospel. They were so excited with this short, uplifting trip they said, **“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.” (Luke 10:17)**

Feeding, modeling and practice, however, was only for a season. For Jesus it was three years. For the apostle Paul, it varied from several months to two or three years. Eagle leaders are Jesus imitators. They give fresh food to their young but are also to be examples of a Spirit led life. They are able to receive words of faith as they wait upon the Lord and are to be models of this high flying kind of living.

The previous model of leadership in some cases has been the “in house” concept, with preaching and teaching being perceived as the mark of a great man or woman of God. Obviously, equipping is vital, but unless the Spirit-led life is modeled, believers may gain the impression that “real” ministry is predominantly about imparting bible knowledge. Their wings remain clipped because they are not taught the Jesus model of relationship whereby they can rely on the direct leading of the Lord.

The Lord is presently ruffling some feathers, and stirring up an emerging group of leaders to go to greater heights and demonstrate the Spirit led life.

For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

1 Cor. 4:20

OUT OF THE NEST

In the natural, if a mature eaglet is unsure about taking a leap of faith and beginning to fly, the parents lovingly remove all the soft lining in the nest. They also refuse to feed it any more and make staying in the nest an uncomfortable option.

Isn't this what Jesus did with His young? When He told them that He was going to leave them to fly by themselves, they thought of themselves as being abandoned orphans (John 14:18).

He removed the comfort of depending directly on Him, stopped His feeding program and told them that it was to their advantage to be on their own because the

Holy Spirit would come (John 16:17). They now had to take a leap of faith and depend on a word from the Spirit being the wind beneath their wings. They had to feed themselves with seeds of faith from the Holy Spirit.

The same detachment process had to happen to the first disciples of the apostles. After learning the apostles doctrine, which was basically the teachings in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the disciples were forced out of their comfort zone.

At the time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.
Acts 8:1,4

By today's standards, these would be considered baby Christians. However, after they were scattered they found their wings. They had obviously learned from the apostles to fly by being led by the Spirit. Having been forced out of the nest with no apostles to turn to, they looked to the Lord and, as a result, became part of the church that turned the world upside down.

Is this emptying of the nest principle applied in our equipping mindsets today? Could this be a major reason we are not seeing a move of the Spirit in most western countries?

In the past, pet parrot churches, with little understanding of releasing, do the opposite. Many seem to make their church more and more comfortable, to encourage their followers to keep coming back. Returning to the nest each week is considered a vital part of a believer's ministry. The perception gained is that they still need to receive more and more prepared hand-feeding...for the rest of their lives.

Mature eagles don't need basic, hand-fed, continual weekly messages. They now are strengthened by being able to get their own spiritual food by the leading of the Spirit from their bibles, other eagles, or through hearing directly from the Lord.

Spiritual eagles are satisfied not by the milk but by meat.

Jesus said:

“My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me.”

John 4:34, KJV

The eagles no longer have to take non-believers to meetings, but have been equipped to lead them to the Lord themselves and minister to them. As a result they fulfill the words of Isaiah, renewing their strength and not fainting or growing weary.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Some may be concerned at the freedom and perceived independence we are encouraging here. They would remind us of the need for the Body of Christ to come together (Heb. 10:25).

Relationships are extremely vital in this high flying life.

Jesus modeled the “eagle church” perfectly for us. He gathered His disciples for equipping. After being a good spiritual parent, He released His church of disciples to go out in pairs and start their own spiritual families.

He also reminded us that eagles do congregate.

“Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

Luke 17:37

When food is available natural eagles gather together for a feed. In the Old Testament, God's people came together for great feasts. In the New Testament, they gathered together as a Body for both natural and spiritual food. They met in the Temple (initially) to receive the basic truths and then had love feasts in their homes where relationships were built over meals.

So continuing daily in one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart. Acts 2:46

There are so many scriptures that refer to the ministry to "one another". Any believer will realize the need to "feed" from one another. This is part of their eagle ministry. After we receive initial milk teaching, we need the meat of exhorting, comforting and stirring one another to sustain an eagle lifestyle.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another... Heb. 10:24-25

However, spiritual eagles flock together because they realize they have a need to give and receive from "one another"...not just hearing from the same one every week. What's the old saying? Birds of a feather, flock together!

THE DOWN SIDE

As the believer's baby down grows into full feathers, there will be problems as these new truths are restored. The negative side is that there will be basically three groups of believers who will not be able to extend their wings.

1. Those who have a caged mentality.
2. Those who have an isolation mindset.
3. Those who form independent small groups.

CAGED MENTALITY

If a pet parrot has been confined for some time and is dependent on its owner's care and hand feeding, it has become institutionalized. If you take the bird out of the security of its cage, it becomes fearful and will instinctively want to go back to its former confinement into what it considers a safe environment.

Some church leaders have done so much for believers in caring for and organizing them, that they have become dependent on what the church organization provides. They see the Sunday congregation as the centre of their Christian life.

Unwittingly some have become spiritually institutionalized and the freedom of living the Spirit-led "eagle life" – of being released as the early church was – can be considered too radical and frightening. As a result, the eagle truths can be too confronting and it is easier and safer to return to the confinement to which they have grown accustomed.

Escaping parrots

At the moment there are many Christians who are considered by some to have "left the church" because they no longer attend a regular traditional church meeting.

There are really two lines of thought here. Those who attend regularly may consider them as backsliders or rebellious. Those leaving may consider themselves as breaking free from captivity.

George Barna, a Christian statistician in the U.S.A. and author of the book “Revolution” has spoken about the millions that are leaving the established church in that country. Initially he questioned the motive of those departing but now he considers it a move of God.

The fruit of rebellion and backsliding people is that there is no longer a need for God in their lives. However, there are those who remain dependent on the Lord, who desire to please Him, and simply want to soar as eagles. For these, there are some additional issues to consider.

ISOLATION MINDSET

If a pet parrot does escape and gets outside the house, it faces immediate dangers. Because it has always been hand-fed it has little idea of how to feed or protect itself and certainly is not totally proficient in flying.

This is a danger for some Christians who have released themselves from traditional fellowship. They have biblical theory, but in practical terms do not have an intimate relationship with the Lord and are not led by the Spirit in ministering to others. After some time they will find their spiritual energy or enthusiasm draining.

Some of these ‘escapees’ have been so hurt or disappointed by their former confinement or control that they are not willing to meet with other believers. They remain alone and as yet, because of their former experiences, are not willing to submit to others. These need to be encouraged and prayed for, because they still do need the help of others to be able to accomplish their real potential.

INDEPENDENT SMALL GROUPS

There are others who do realize the need to support “one another” and who meet together in small groups in homes. However, because of their mistrust caused by their former experiences, they are wary of other parts of the Body and even other house churches. They remain independent but alive, feeding on God’s word but, in many cases, they have not been equipped to hear from the Lord or to win the lost without the help of a “minister”. Many realize something is still missing because they are unable to rise up to the potential they know is there.

Those who want to fulfil their greatest potential will understand the need to network with others so that the equippers, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, can bring them and any future baby believers to full maturity (Eph. 4:11-13). Otherwise, like those in home groups in traditional churches, they will find themselves seemingly going around in circles. They may be free from a system of control but not truly released to fill their God given destiny.

LIBERTY OR LEGALISM.

The apostle Paul also wrote to the Galatians, whom he had considered had gone back into captivity. Anything less than a Spirit-led life was considered by him to be a form of bondage.

But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under law.

Gal. 5:18

If you put it around the other way it says, ***But if you are not led by the Spirit you are under law.***

God wants to release every believer to be totally free to be led by Him.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has set us free, and do not be entangled with the yoke of bondage. ***Gal. 5:1***

GREATER MOTIVATION

To help some who need to overcome their previous disappointments, hurts and suspicions which in some cases has led to apathy, there needs to be a Biblical motivation.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ***1 John 4:18***

First of all, we must understand that the Lord purchased us and He is now our owner. His purpose for paying that high price of His death was to enable us to grow to be imitators of His Son. His prayer “that they may be one just as We are one” is ongoing. Anything less than fulfilling the destiny He planned for us would only bring our Father disappointment.

Secondly, we must realize that, through our relationship with Him, we can release His love and power and change the lives of others. We can turn our cities upside down and lead exciting lives.

Thirdly, surely none of us wants to stay bored or unfulfilled. We can stay within the confines of “the house”, whether it is a large church, a house church or our own home. Even though it may be relatively comfortable, it will never be totally satisfying.

A desire to be filled with His continuous peace and joy can be a final motivating force.

THE COST

Sometimes eagles grow disorderly feathers which actually impede their flying ability. Naturally they pluck them out. Believers who have grown feathers of erroneous thinking because of misguided teaching will find their momentum hampered. These entrenched mindsets will need to be discarded and new truth allowed to grow in their place.

...let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. ***Rom 12:2, NLT***

As well, flying does take some exertion. It is much easier to sit on a perch than take off. Before you can get the wind beneath your wings and soar you need to put in some time and effort. This does not mean you are to get into a flap and attend more meetings, but spend more of your week meeting with Him, just as Jesus did.

The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He awakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear like one who is being taught. The sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious, I have not drawn back. ***Isaiah. 50.4-5, NIV***

The Lord has told us that every believer is capable of hearing His personal voice and following His instructions (John 10:3-4). Like Him, we can learn to do this. Morning by morning we can be a student being taught what to say to the weary.

Let's not draw back into a previous caged or confined mentality but, instead, learn how to have an "instructed tongue" which will release us into the full, potent eagle ministry He has destined for us.

And you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.... Therefore if the Son makes you free you shall be free indeed. *John 8:32, 36*