

Explore the Bible: October 25

God Renews • Isaiah 40:18-31

By Don Hicks



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“But those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles” (Isaiah 40:31 CSB). Throughout history people have been fascinated with the eagle, and the Holy Spirit lead Isaiah to use the majestic bird to communicate a very important truth.

Let’s take a light American history lesson to understand the place of the eagle in our American culture. On June 20, 1782, the Continental Congress adopted the Great Seal of the United States of America which included a representation of a bald eagle with 13 arrows (representing the first 13 states) and an olive branch with 13 leaves (representing their great desire for peace). The eagle itself represented the strength of the new nation.

The bald eagle’s favorite food is fresh fish caught directly from large bodies of water. These large birds can weigh as much as 18 pounds with a wing span of up to 27 inches. Because bald eagles are so large, they build the largest tree nests in the world. The nests can be up to 10 feet across and 20 feet deep. Bald eagles mate for life and often use the same nest for years. In areas like Mississippi, the eagles stay in their nesting area year-round.

Isaiah tells us God will renew our strength if we trust in the LORD. This renewed strength will let us soar like eagles. To understand the boldness of this promise, we need to remember that eagles soar on convection currents in the sky despite their tremendous size and weight. When gliding and flapping, they can reach speeds of 43 miles per hour, and 30 miles per hour if carrying a large fish. When they dive into the water to catch fish, they may reach speeds near 100 miles an hour.

Isaiah's illustration using the eagle is very strong and almost timeless. The Holy Spirit is giving us an illustration that helps you and me understand what God will do for us in October 2020, if we will trust in Him.

Over the years that I worked in the Baptist Building in Jackson, I enjoyed going into the office of Jim Futral, the recently-retired executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, because of that's where he displayed his large collection of porcelain eagles. Many of the eagles were gifts from people in Mississippi who appreciated his use of this verse to effectively express God's promise to renew us. I began to notice eagles in pastors' studies and Christian homes all across Mississippi and just about anywhere I traveled in the country.

Let's try to better understand ways to apply the truths in the verse. To help us be sure we make full use of this verse, let's look again at the whole verse. "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," (Isaiah 40:31c KJV). If some of you find it hard to identify with soaring eagles, refer to the Bible where God renews His followers to run and not grow weary. Many, if not most of us, understand that we can only run without becoming tired or weary if the LORD personally renews our strength.

Isaiah answers any question about God ignoring us: "Jacob, why

do you say, and, Israel, why do you assert: 'My way is hidden from the LORD, and my claim is ignored by My God?'" (Isaiah 40:27 CSB). The Prophet Isaiah said, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth. He never becomes faint or weary; there is no limit to his understanding" (Isaiah 40:28 CSB). Let's break verse 28 apart:

– ***Do you not know?*** The clear implication is if you know God as your Savior, you should already believe He is strong enough to never faint or become tired.

– ***Have you not heard?*** This is a rhetorical, admonishing question because he is speaking to God's chosen people who have had the benefit of God's revelation for many centuries. We should be able to hear, too, if we study our Bibles and attend when God's people assemble.

– ***The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the whole earth.*** God is God forever and creator of everything.

– ***He never becomes faint or weary...*** God has no limitation to his strength and energy, which is not the case for us.

– ***...there is no limit to his understanding.*** God is Creator of everything and God is forever. Why would we think He is limited?

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