

Wings (Deuteronomy 32:11,12)

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"As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,
So the Lord alone led him " (Deut. 32:11,12)

The Lord's mind for His people is that they shall have wings, wings that can cope with the elements and master them. He is altogether averse to their remaining unduly in soft lined nests, being fed, and dependent upon what comes from no exercise of their own.

I. While it remains fully true that "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing", and "apart from Me ye can do nothing", with all that is meant by such words as to the utter inability of man by nature to produce or achieve anything for God's satisfaction, it is equally true that by new birth we inherit a new set of spiritual faculties, capacities, and potentialities. In that which is imparted by this work of the Spirit of God, there are therefore inherent, though at first, largely latent, powers and possibilities, as in all infancy. These inherent potentialities must be developed, and here begins the discipline which involves us in all those struggles and conflicts and perplexities of the soul which have marked one side of the life of every one who has ever come to be of real account to God. See Hebrews 5:12-14.

II. The development of these faculties and powers will take place in a realm which spells disaster and death, but for the Lord. That expanse of emptiness, that abyss, into which the eaglets are hurled or forced by the mother eagle is undoubtedly, apart from her, the realm of their undoing and end. There is no doubt about it, that leaving all foolhardiness (sometimes misnamed faith) on our part aside, the ways of Divine demand are often those which spell our complete undoing if left to ourselves. Paul could speak of "deaths oft", and having "the sentence that it was death". But as the eaglets, through many a so-to-speak last minute intervention on the part of loving concern, learned what that strange way of love was intended to teach, they gradually turned that which in itself would have been their destruction to be their servant. Their wings mastered and used the air, the wind, the storm, and made these serve their purpose.

"The things which happened.....have fallen out..... unto progress....."

So the Lord would teach us, and bring us to a spiritual state, so that the very works of evil and Satan are taken hold of and made to serve spiritual ends. Paul says "all things are yours", and in the catalogue he includes "death". "Death is yours"; by which, in keeping with the other things mentioned, he can only mean that death is to be our servant, not our tyrant. Nothing could be more an enemy than death, but it can be made to serve very great interests. It depends upon how we view and handle it.

III. In our training to master the elements, we learn one lesson amongst many. It is that here is Divine providence and love that intervenes when things have got beyond a certain point. The fact is that many times we thought that the end had come; that now, at length, we were going out or under. We saw nothing beyond and "despaired of life". But, equally, the fact is that we have not yet gone under, and are still going on. Resurrection has taken place many times. We do not know just how it is, but here we are, and that after many years in which not a few experiences of imminent disaster have been ours. Well, He spread His wings under us and bore us up again, and He "Who delivered us.... will deliver.... will also still deliver us."

IV. What is it all about? Yes, it is to develop capacity and ascendancy in us and to make us spiritually responsible, competent, and assured, but in that process the Lord is seeking to get established in us faith in His Divine wisdom. The terrifying experiences are really meant to issue in our confession that the Lord knew what He was doing and did the only thing by which, despite our questioning and doubting, His end could be reached. Thus do we come to know that wisdom lies within enshrouding mystery.

V. The last word is that this education is progressive. The mother eagle knows when wisdom dictates that a respite is called for. The Lord is no less wise, and spreads our training over an extended and graduated course. The beginners could not stand what those further on are called upon to accept, and it would be sacrificing value for the Lord to let us go back to the easier conditions of earlier stages.