

THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD.

Isaiah 40: 27-31.

Ebhesians 6:10-20. Ferne Graham.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.
They shall-MOUNT UP LIKE EAGLES**RUN AND NOT BE WEARY**WALK
AND FAINT NOT-.

This is a verse with a good flow to it. The words roll off one's tongue, and sound forceful. They paint word pictures- we can see things happening- mounting the air with the wings of an eagle- running with strength and speed and not being weary: Walking ON AND ON- without loss of strength (AND FAINT NOT)

ALL OF THIS FOR" waiting on the Lord."

But I wonder how many of us have puzzled over this verse -
have wondered what its message was to the people of Israel-
WHAT IT MEANS TO US -An then when we find a message and truth
we realize that the basic elements of being human have not
changed since this was written. The soaring- the running-
the walking- can refer to life's stages - and these have been
a part of life through the centuries. It is not a regression,
but rather a growing- we fly -we run- we walk.

THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES. It sounds very
picturesque-and almost impossible. And yet I am sure there are
some among us who probably feel ready to "take off" sometimes -
and others who remember when it used to be that way.

A few years ago I met a MISSIONARY DOCTOR who had served in
Korea, and had just returned to Canada to retire. She talked of
her work, speaking with great ENTHUSIASM AND VIGOR, and I
recall her description of the early days in Korea, when she used
to FLY through the hospital and out into the villages day and
night.

AND WE'VE ALL SEEN EXAMPLES OF THIS-OR LIVED EXAMPLES OF IT*
The enthusiasm- the energy- the new ideas carried one eagerly
from one task to another. WE WERE WILLING TO EXPERIMENT- to take
chances to make mistakes. Sometimes we felt that WE ALONE
COULD CHANGE AN INSTITUTION -or a community - or even the world.
PERHAPS OUR WILLINGNESS TO TRY made up for the mistakes we made,
or the AUDACITY WE SHOED IN THE FACE OF THOSE WHO TOLD US THAT
SOME MOUNTAINS weren't meant to be moved.

Some years ago I attended a noontime prayer service in one of
Toronto's larger churches after which the 800 or more who had
gathered for prayer marched in orderly fashion to present
a BRIEF TO ONE OF THE FOREIGN EMBASSIES. We WERE an impressive
group, representing all the Christian denominations and the
Jewish faith. Our presentation for the Embassy had been carefully
and prayerfully planned as had the whole march.

BUT AS WE APPROACHED THE EMBASSY WE CAME FACE TO FACE WITH
A MUCH SMALLER GROUP-University students who had been camping
out IN FRONT OF THE EMBASSY FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND NIGHTS. They
were a somewhat bedraggled group, HUDDLED UNDER COATS AND BLANKETS-
A BIT UNKEMPT AND UNCOMBED. They watched us come- in straight
lines and with motorcycle police holding back traffic for us-
and some of them said, "Thanks for your help," or "I thought
you'd never get here."

The hurting part for me was to hear some of our numbers saying things like-

"YOU CAN'T TELL ME THEY REALLY CARE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING THEY'RE HERE FOR A GOOD TIME."

"SURE*IT'S EASIER THAN WRITING EXAMS."

I wanted to cry at that moment. I knew that if it had not been for that bedraggled group of young people, many of us WOULD HAVE REMAINED AT HOME IN OUR EASY CHAIRS. We'd have watched the news, and maybe said, "ISN'T THAT A SCHEME!" when we saw violence and inhumanity. But this group had seen it too- had taken up their vigil, saying to us in many different ways, "DON'T JUST SIT THERE-DO SOMETHING."

Our way of doing something was not theirs. We felt that our jobs were of sufficient importance to keep us at them, instead of camping in front of an embassy. That was why we came together during the noon hour. We felt that our belief in God brought us together- that our responsibility for God's people demanded some action. If we had analyzed it I'M SURE WE'D HAVE SAID THAT OUR ORGANIZED PETITION WOULD HAVE MORE INFLUENCE THAN THE ALL NIGHT VIGILS. But in a sense the young people had SOARED HIGHER, and in doing so made the rest of us aware of the need and SHAMED US INTO SOME ACTION. Furthermore the way in which they had chosen to do it was not an easy way.

THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD SHALL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH. THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES. More power to them.

"HE'S MAD, ISN'T HE?" some probably said of the young man Jesus. AND THE YOUNG SAUL THOUGHT HE MUST HAVE BEEN-UNTIL HE TOO WAS CHANGED into Paul the missionary AND then his friends called him mad.

And down through the years a young Frances of Assisi, or a Martin Luther, or a John Knox, or a Charles Wesley became obsessed with an idea and a faith which brought opportunity for great change. PROBABLY SOME LUKEWARM BYSTANDER SAID THEN, "Mad, isn't he?" until someone wise enough would remark, "YES HE'S MAD- AND HOW I WISH HE WOULD BITE YOU AND ME!"

To those who are still young and vigorous may we say, "KEEP YOUR SIGHTS HIGH, AND LET YOUR ZEAL CARRY YOU TO MEET THEM."

And to those who are no longer in that group, may we say- "LET'S NOT SHOOT OUR SOARING GROUP DOWN BEFORE THEY GET STARTED."

We need each other- and the soaring of some helps us all to see how it might be.

BUT THEN WE COME BACK TO THE SECOND PART OF THE VERSE- "THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT BE WEARY."

Someone pointed out to me awhile ago that our prayers in special services almost always ask for guidance and support for the young, and for the elderly- but rarely for the people in between. AND THEN SHE ADDED: "And they're the ones who carry most of the responsibility for the world."

AND IN A SENSE, it's true: and we might add- they're the ones who are often TRAPPED IN UNSATISFYING JOBS, TRAPPED BECAUSE OTHERS DEPEND ON THEM TO CARRY THROUGH IN A RESPONSIBLE WAY*- they're the ones who are blamed for ~~THE~~ WRONGS OF SOCIETY, THE SYSTEMS THAT FAIL OR CAUSE CONFUSION.

They're the ones who must often carry the loads of public office- who take on work of boards and committees- who offer leadership to the young and support the ageing- and at the

same

same time carry responsible positions in the working world- as well as responsibilities for home and families.

THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT BE WEARY- sometimes we even wish that the last part were true.

It's hard to find exciting stories about this group-they're so busy planning and carrying out plans that they squeeze a prayer meeting and a march to a foreign embassy into one noon hour.

So I went to the newspapers- and as well as news of violence and denial of human rights I found some other items:

USE NEWSPAPER ITEMS--- MANDATE .

We need this group of people- even though sometimes those of us who are part of it are tempted to abdicate.

There's a load to be shouldered a needy and hurting world to be saved for future generations. WE NEED TO REMEMBER that "They that wait upon the Lord shall run and not be weary."

And then we come to the last group described in the verse. THEY SHALL WALK AND NOT FAINT. There comes a time in the life of each one of us when we no longer want -or are able to - carry the burdens of responsibility that once were possible. NO LONGER DO THEY SOAR*OR JOG*-THROUGH LIFE -but are glad to be able to walk and faint not.

THESE ARE THE SAINTS OF EARTH- very often the ones who continue to serve in the BEST POSSIBLE WAY, even with decreasing strength and energy. These are the ones WHO HAVE GIVEN OF THEMSELVES ALWAYS, and never counted the cost.

Every once in a while we read of these persons in our church papers. THEY HAVE GIVEN YEARS AND YEARS OF SERVICE IN A CHOIR, or on a church board, or as a teacher or leader of youth. WE COULD POINT OUT CONTRIBUTIONS made by such people in this congregation. EVEN WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO DO TASKS THAT ONCE WERE THEIRS- even because of failing health they now seem to be STANDING STILL- even then there is often a show of SPRIT and ENDURANCE THAT IS HARD TO MATCH. The old relationships and caring continue and there is no whisper of loss of faith. They shall walk and FAINT not.

The lives of each of us have been influenced and are STILL BEING INFLUENCED BY SUCH PEOPLE. Some years ago there was a national ball tournament in a ball park across the street from a church in which I was working. WHEN RAINY WEATHER RUINED THE PLAN FOR GAMES- the last game- an important one was in progress just across the street as we arrived at church Sunday morning. A GOOD FRIEND OF MINE, A MAN WELL INTO HIS 80's missed only that one game in the whole tournament. WE MET ON THE STEPS OF THE CHURCH listening to sounds from the ball park and I suggested that it might be hard for him to make the decision to come to church. HE DREW HIMSELF UP TO HIS FULL HEIGHT, LOOKED ME STRAIGHT IN THE EYE and said, "Certainly not! I know where I WANT TO BE ON SUNDAY MORNINGS."

We need you-oh how we need you! with your faithfulness and your STEADY WITNESS. Times may change, new leadership replaces the old - but there's strength in KNOWING THAT YOU ARE WAITING UPON THE LORD - that you have mounted up with wings as eagles, you have run and not been weary , that you can continue to walk and faint not.

AND THAT'S THE KEY TO all of this - that waiting upon the Lord -
finding a centre within us that is atune to the will and the
GRACE OF GOD.

The letter to the Ephesians called it ~~PUTTING ON~~ THE WHOLE
ARMOR OF GOD * and speaks of prayer and faith and strength
against the elements of darkness and evil.

There's no easy way to have this happen - and yet it is a
gift. It's ours to accept - and to keep . It's not a burden to
carry, but wings to carry us -. 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--THEY SHALL WALK
AND NOT FAINT.

PRAYER. God of our yesterdays and our tomorrows be with us
today. In whatever stage of life we find ourselves guide our
thoughts and actions. We wait upon You - in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Eden-Riding Mountain .
Jan. 14th/79