

# Power Given to the Faint

by J.C. Philpot

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of waiting upon the Lord and trusting in His power, even when we feel faint and weak.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23, Isaiah 40:29, Mark 9:24, John 14:1

**Topics:** "Spiritual Weakness", "Divine Empowerment"

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## Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the journey of God's people through various states and cases, from feeling faint and weary to waiting upon the Lord, renewing their strength, mounting up with wings as eagles, running, and walking in faith. He emphasizes the importance of being humbled, emptied of self-strength, and relying on God's power to progress in the Christian walk. Philpot warns against relying on natural zeal and strength, highlighting the inevitable downfall of those who do not experience the humbling work of the Spirit in their hearts.

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## Transcript

Preached at Zoar Chapel, London, on July 20, 1845, by J. C. Philpot

"He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but those who 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 40:29-31

In order to understand the mind and meaning of the Holy Spirit in these words, we must take a glimpse at their connection.

We find, in the preceding verses, the Lord addressing himself to his people, and speaking to them as deeply exercised in their souls. But what was the source of their exercises? It was this--that their path was so dark and obscure. "Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, my way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" The path in which the family of God were then walking was exceedingly perplexing. Their "way"--that is, the path they were taking--the way of the Spirit's teaching in their conscience--the mode of the Lord's dealing with their soul, was so intricate and obscure, that they could not believe it was a right way. The Lord had hidden his face from them, and did not show them the nature or reason of his dealings with them. Infidelity, seizing hold of this circumstance, worked so powerfully in their hearts, that they burst forth into this cry, "My way is hidden from the Lord." Surely he

cannot see the way I am taking, or he would have appeared sooner on my behalf. "And my judgment," that is, my cause, "is passed over from my God." He neglects to take that notice of me which I seek at his hands; he passes me by as unworthy of his regard; he slights my cause, and rejects my prayer, as though I did not belong to him.

Now, in order to meet these exercises in the hearts of his people--in order to apply a suitable remedy for these workings of unbelief and infidelity--the Lord answers by appealing to their own experience--"Have you not known, have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary?" However you may faint, however you may be wearied of him--whatever be your hard thoughts concerning his dealings with you--do you not know, that the everlasting God remains "the same yesterday, today, and forever"--that he is not a changeable God, tossed to and fro like yourself; but that he "rests in his love," and is ever the same--that "he faints not" under the burdens which you cast upon him; "neither is weary" of you, though you are often weary of him? And, with respect to this intricate path in which you are walking, he adds, "No one can measure the depths of his understanding." He knows what is best for you; and though your present path is dark and obscure in your eyes, it is bright and clear in his.

He would, therefore, urge this upon the conscience of his exercised and complaining child, 'Your part is to sit still, and wait until the deliverance appear; in due time, I will explain to you the nature and reason of these mysterious dealings.' He then goes on still further to clear up the point by the words of the text--"He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall--but those who 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."

If we look at the text, we shall observe, that there are two characters traced out in it. Of these, one is set forth by the expression "youths" and "young men." And not only is their character set forth, but also their destiny is described that they "shall faint," and "shall utterly fall." And, on the other hand, we have another, a spiritual character traced out, as one who "has no might," and yet "waits upon the Lord." And we find his destiny also pointed out. For as there is an end reserved for the one--an utter fall; so there is an end reserved for the other--a spiritual blessing.

I shall, then, if God enable me, endeavor this morning to trace out these two distinct characters, and show the allotted portion and end of each.

We will begin with a description of the character pointed out by the expression "youths" and "young men;" and then show what is their allotted portion and appointed destiny.

I. By the expression "youths" and "young men" is implied a contrast between the whole-hearted condition of the professing world and the fainting state of God's family. Youth is the season of loveliness, vigor, and strength; and thus, figuratively and typically, the "youths" and "young men" are those professors of religion who have never been weakened and brought down by a work of the Spirit upon their hearts; but who retain all their natural loveliness, activity, and vigor. In the exercise of this activity and strength, these youths run a race, but not the race that God's people run in faith and patience. In a word, the expression "youths" and "young men" describes unburdened professors, who have never had such a work of grace upon their hearts as has laid trouble upon their souls, or wrought penetrating convictions in their conscience. Never having been humbled in their souls, nor exercised in their minds, nor afflicted by a body

of sin and death, they retain all their natural vigor. It has never been drawn away from them by the running sores of sin and guilt; they have never been drained nor exhausted of it by lacerating wounds in their conscience; and they thus preserve all that loveliness, youthful vigor, and beauty which have been battered down in the Lord's afflicted family.

Now when the Lord's people, exercised and tried in their souls, compare their deformity, ugliness, and wrinkles, with the loveliness of these unhumiliated professors, it is often to them a bitter contrast. They often see in unexercised professors much more zeal, consistency, earnestness, amiability, activity, and apparent devotedness, than they can see and feel in their own hearts; and, contrasting their own wrinkled and weather-beaten visages with the smooth and glowing cheeks of others, they cry out, "My skin is black upon me; my flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust--my skin is broken and become loathsome" Job 30:30

And so with respect to the activity, strength, and vigor of these "youths" and "young men." The Lord's people have often no heart to "run with patience the race that is set before them." Spiritual things, instead of being their solace and delight, are often their burden. The enmity of their carnal mind works up against divine realities; and so far from being active and zealous in them, they are often so burdened in the things of God, that they feel unable to do any one thing which is acceptable in His sight. But these "young men," who have never seen the breadth, nor felt the spirituality of God's law--who have never known their inward corruption, never been plagued with a body of sin and death, never exercised with the perplexities that God's people are tried with--retain all that zeal and loveliness--those fleshly substitutes for vital power and godliness--which the exercised family of God once had, but have long lost.

There are those among the Lord's family "whose senses are not as yet exercised to discern both good and evil," and therefore cannot see the difference between pretense and reality, between 'nature in its highest form' and 'grace in its lowest form'. When therefore one of these poor, burdened, exercised children of God contrasts his own lack of zeal, earnestness, and activity--his darkness of mind, deadness of soul, and coldness of affection--with the earnestness and activity of many a zealous religionist around him, he is almost tempted to think that they are right and he wrong, and that they will stand when he shall fall.

But how different are God's ways from our ways, and God's thoughts from our thoughts! How differently does he view these "youths" and "young men" from the admiration bestowed upon them by the professing world! What hollowness, deceitfulness, and hypocrisy does he see working under all this natural loveliness, strength, and vigor! How the Lord sees that all this strength is weakness, all this wisdom is folly, all this righteousness is hypocrisy, and all this earnestness and zeal is but fallen nature carrying into religion the same restless activity which cultivates the farm, or manages the shop--a buyer and seller in the temple, and not a spiritual worshiper in the sanctuary!

But what is the sentence which the Lord has passed concerning such? A sentence that we see, more or less, fulfilled every day. They shall all "utterly fall." In due time these lovely and vigorous "youths," these strong and active "young men" will faint and fall. Though for a time they seem to run well, they never reach the goal. Sin, which for a time was dead in them, begins to revive; temptations that before never beset them, are laid in their paths; snares before hidden, they are now entangled by--their zeal, their earnestness, their activity gradually decline; and thus, long before they come to the end of the race, they faint, and are utterly unable to proceed any further. They give up their religion, often abandon even a profession, go back into the world, fall into sin, and "concerning faith make shipwreck."

But even if some of them do not faint by the way, they "shall utterly fall." God never has sanctioned, and never will sanction any religion but "his own divine work in the soul". All other wisdom he proves to be folly, all other strength weakness, all other profession but that which springs from his own work in the conscience to be "the spider's web" and "the hypocrite's hope." He has therefore determined, in his own sovereign appointment, that these lovely and vigorous "youths" and "young men"--these active professors of religion--these unhumbled and un-exercised ones, "shall utterly fall;" and if it be not before, a death-bed shall unmask them; or, if they even proceed in confidence through the dark valley as we read in the Pilgrim's Progress of one that did so, yet the day of judgment will reveal them. God will discover them by showing that they have been feeding upon ashes; and that a deceived heart has turned them aside; that they have had no saving interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, and no participation in the Spirit's teaching.

How different is the character, and how different is the destiny of the Lord's own family! How determined the Lord is to mortify the pride of man, to subvert all man's purposes, and bring about his own counsels of infinite wisdom, in direct opposition to the wisdom of the creature! What would be our judgment? Would it not be this? That these "youths" so lovely, vigorous, and strong--so earnest, active, and zealous in religion--would surely be crowned--that these would without doubt receive the prize? And could we believe that the faint and weary, the hopeless and helpless, should receive the blessing? But God, on purpose to disappoint and pour contempt upon all creature wisdom, has determined otherwise. He has decreed that there shall be no wisdom honored but his own wisdom, no strength crowned but his own strength, no righteousness exalted but his own righteousness, no purpose accomplished but his own eternal sacred purpose. He therefore brings all his people by a secret, mysterious work upon their conscience into that state and case where he alone gets to himself all the glory.

II. Bearing this in mind, we may be enabled more clearly to see the case and state of the Lord's people, as distinguished from the state and case of unhumbled and professors. "He gives power to the faint." This, then, is God's description of his people, that they are "faint." Until they are faint, there is no promise for those who God will give them power.

But what makes them faint? There are several causes.

1. One cause of their fainting is, the burdens that are put upon their shoulders. It is so naturally. If you carry a heavy burden a long way, you are pretty sure to get faint before you arrive at your destination. So spiritually. The Lord's people have heavy burdens; sometimes guilt upon the conscience; at others, exercises perplexing them; passions striving for the mastery; an adulterous eye, and an idolatrous heart. These burdens make them faint and weary in their souls.

But what do we understand by fainting? It is a swooning away, so as to lose all knowledge of where we are--a falling down in a state of exhaustion, so as not to be able to move a step further. This is the case with many of God's family. They are often so weary and exhausted with the burdens they have to carry, that they are actually unable, in their own feelings, to move a single step further; they swoon away, so as to lose all consciousness of where they are and what they are.

2. Grievous wounds will make a man faint. So spiritually. The wounds of sin, the fiery darts of Satan, the arrows of God in the conscience, make the heart of many of God's children faint within them. They cannot move a step further; their very life-blood is drained away, and they sink down, and are unable to move forward from weakness and exhaustion.

3. Denial of food will also produce faintness. Hunger and famine soon exhaust the body. So spiritually. When supplies of grace are withheld--when heavenly manna does not fall--when God does not appear--when his testimonies do not drop into the heart--when his love and blood are not applied--when, as the Prophet speaks, there is "a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord--and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it" Amos 8:11,12. This spiritual destitution makes the Lord's famished people faint and feeble, and their heart to sink and swoon within them.

But how strange it appears, before we are spiritually led into a knowledge of the Lord's wise and gracious dealings, that all this painful work in the conscience should be a needful, an indispensable preparation of heart to receive the gospel in its fullness, sweetness, and power!

What a mysterious way! That God's people should have to be emptied of all their strength, that the Lord may communicate his--that their very life-blood, their native stock of goodness, excellency, and wisdom, must be drained out of their veins, that the life-blood of Jesus may be poured into them! What a mysterious path! that we are not fit to receive any blessing until thoroughly emptied--that there is no deliverance until shut up in prison--no mercy until brought into misery--no manifested laying of the everlasting arms underneath the soul until it is ready to sink into the dreadful precipice of perdition! But were it not so, we would want to share the glory with God. It would be partly our strength, and partly God's; partly our own righteousness, and partly Christ's; partly our wisdom, and partly Jehovah's. Therefore, it is absolutely needful, however mysterious, for the glory of God, and the consolation and salvation of his people, that all our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness should be drained away--that the wisdom, strength, and righteousness of Christ should become manifestly ours.

III. Now, when the soul is brought down to this spot--and it may take years to bring it there--a succession of trials and troubles, difficulty after difficulty, stripe after stripe, blow after blow--many painful dispensations in providence, perplexing paths in grace, burdensome trials of body and soul may all have been needed to bring down the proud, stubborn heart with labor. But when at length the soul is brought into that state of poverty and destitution--then it is fit to receive power. "He gives power to the faint; and to those who have no might he increases strength." They are not fit to receive God's strength until they are faint and feeble. Weakness is the only needful qualification; and this sense of weakness is wrought in their heart by the teaching and operation of the blessed Spirit.

But how does the Lord give "power?" The power that God gives is quite distinct from our own. Our power is only another name for weakness; and therefore the sooner we lose it the better. But God's power is real power. It is not a fiction, like our own; not a delusion and a deceit, like the boasted strength of man; but there is a divine reality in it.

1. But "he gives power" in various ways. Sometimes he gives power to persevere. It is at times with God's people as with Jonah. When Jonah was in the belly of the whale, when the weeds were wrapped about his head, and he was in his own feelings "in the belly of hell," yet he said, "I will look again toward your holy temple" Jon 2:4. He was not then brought out of the belly of the whale; yet in the belly of the whale, and in the very belly of hell, God gave him power to look to his holy temple. If God had not given him power, he would have looked into the very belly of hell in the horrors of despair, instead of looking again to his holy temple in the actings of living faith.

Thus the Lord often gives his people power to take a longing, languishing look at the blood and righteousness of Jesus; to come to the Lord, as "mighty to save," with the same feelings with which Esther went into the presence of the king--"I will go in; and if I perish, I perish." It is with them sometimes as with the four lepers who sat at the entering in of the gate of Samaria--"Why should we sit here waiting to die? We will starve if we stay here, and we will starve if we go back into the city. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway." 2 Kings 7:3-4. And so the Lord's people are sometimes brought to this state--"If I perish, I will perish at his footstool." If he gives no answer of mercy, they will still cling to his feet, and beseech him to look upon, and save them.

Now this is "power," real power. Despair would have laid hold upon their soul, if this secret power had not been given to them. Sometimes we learn this by painful experience. Our trials sometimes stun us, and then there is no power to seek or pray. But when power is given, there is a pleading with the Lord, a going out of the heart's desires after him, and a fulfillment in the soul of the experience described by the prophet, "I will wait upon the Lord, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him" Isa 8:17.

2. He gives power to believe; for it is the work of the blessed Spirit to raise up living faith in the heart. He gives power to hope; for it is only so far as he communicates power, that we can cast forth this anchor of the soul. He gives power to love; for it is only as he gives power, that we feel any measure of affection either to the Lord or to his people. In a word, every spiritual desire, every breath of fervent prayer, every movement of the soul heavenward, every trusting in God's name, relying on his word, and hanging upon his promises, spring out of power communicated by the Lord to the faint and feeble.

3. Sometimes the Lord gives power by recalling past mercies and former dealings to the mind; by enabling the soul to look unto him "from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar" Ps 42:6; not to give up all its confidence, or cast the things God has done for it behind its back--but to take encouragement from the past to hope for the future. As the Church says, "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope" La 3:21. And as she pleads, "Awake, awake, Lord! Robe yourself with strength! Rouse yourself as in the days of old when you slew Egypt, the dragon of the Nile. Are you not the same today, the one who dried up the sea, making a path of escape when you saved your people?" Isaiah 51:9-10 This is putting the Lord in remembrance Isa 43:26; and a making use of past favors to plead with him for more.

IV. But there is another word added, "And to those who have no might he increases strength." The Lord's people are often in this state, that they "have no might." All their power seems exhausted, and their strength completely drained away; sin appears to have got the mastery over them; and they feel as if they had neither will nor ability to run the race set before them, or persevere in the way of the Lord. Yet, even then, they have strength; for it says, "he increases strength." It does not say, he gives, bestows, communicates strength; but "he increases strength." How can this be? We must have power to feel our weakness, as dear Gadsby used to say, 'We need power to sink.' God must put forth his power to enable us to fall down into nothingness and helplessness. It therefore says, "he increases strength." As though it would imply, 'Is not the very power to sink down into creature weakness, helplessness, and nothingness--is not this strength?' It is so in God's mysterious dealings. And therefore, "to those who have no might" in other words, those who are sensible in their own consciences that they have no power at all, who are completely exhausted of nature's strength and wisdom to these "he increases strength."

Now the Lord "increases strength" in a very mysterious way. He often drops strength stillly and secretly into the soul. We are not always to expect very great manifestations of God. This is not the way in which the Lord usually increases strength. His visits to the soul are often better known by their fruits and effects, and by looking back upon them when they are past, than by any immediate impulse. The strength given is more easily felt--than the hand seen which communicates it. In this respect it much resembles the new birth, of which the Lord says, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell whence it comes, and where it goes" John 3:8.

One fruit and effect of divine strength communicated to the soul is, that it is enabled to persevere in the way of the Lord. "The righteous shall hold on his way" Job 17:9. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day" Pr 4:18.

Now what has kept us to this day? Some of you here have made a profession ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years. What has kept us? When powerful temptations were spread for our feet, what preserved us from falling headlong into them? When we felt the workings of strong lusts, what kept us from being altogether carried captive by them? When we look at the difficulties of the way, the exercise and the perplexities which our souls have had to grapple with, the persecutions from relations or superiors, the hard blows from sinners and saints that we have had to encounter--what has still kept in us a desire to fear God, and a heart in some measure tender before him? When we view the infidelity, unbelief, carnality, worldly-mindedness, hypocrisy, pride, and presumption of our fallen nature, what has kept us still believing, hoping, loving, longing, and looking to the Lord? When we think of our deadness, coldness, torpidity, rebelliousness, perverseness, love to evil, aversion to good, and all the abounding corruptions of our nature, what has kept us from giving up the very profession of religion, and swimming down the powerful current that has so long and so often threatened to sweep us utterly from the Lord and his people?

Is it not the putting forth of the Lord's secret power in our souls? Had we been without the fear of the Lord, in a mere profession, like the "youths" and "young men," we would long ago have fainted, and utterly fallen. Can we not look back, and recall to mind our first religious companions, those with whom we started in the race--those whom we perhaps envied for their greater piety, zeal, holiness, and earnestness, and with which we painfully contrasted our own sluggishness and carnality, admiring them, and condemning ourselves? Where are they all, or the greater part of them? I can say, for my part, I would be very sorry to be in the places where most of them are. Some have embraced soul-destroying errors; others are buried in a worldly religious system; and others are wrapped up in delusion and fleshly confidence.

Thus, while the "youths" and "young men" fall into the snares of the devil, God, by putting forth his secret power in the hearts of his fainting ones, keeps his fear alive in their souls, holds up their goings in his paths that their footsteps slip not, brings them out of all their temptations and troubles, delivers them from every evil work, and preserves them unto his heavenly kingdom. He drains them of all their strength, that he may communicate his own--and destroys the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent, that he may get all the honor and glory to his own great name. He thus secures the salvation of his people by his own free grace; and while he hides pride from their eyes, he saves them by the only way that is suitable to them, and glorifying to himself.

V. "But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." This is another mark and feature of the Lord's family. They are not only faint and feeble in themselves, and without might to do anything spiritually

good; but they "wait upon the Lord."

What makes them "wait upon the Lord." Their very weakness, their very faintness, their very helplessness--these are so many instrumental causes which, in the hands of the Spirit, make them wait on the Lord. They "wait upon the Lord," therefore, that they may receive out of his fullness those communications of light, life, and grace, which they have not in themselves. And only in proportion as they daily feel faint and weary, are daily sensible of their own weakness and helplessness, do they "wait upon the Lord."

But before they can "wait upon the Lord," they must have an experimental knowledge of him; they must have a view of him by the eyes of their spiritual understanding; feel the goings out of their heart's affections after him--be assured in their conscience that he is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto him; and feel a childlike dependence upon him as willing to save.

But the word "waiting" implies several things. It implies,

1. That we have faith to wait. Do we not often feel such infidelity working within that we cannot wait upon the Lord? When the spirit of infidelity comes in like a flood, what waiting is there upon God? Does not this subtle spirit effectually baffle all our attempts to wait upon him? Sometimes unbelief works. When we call upon the Lord, he hides his face, and covers his throne with a dark cloud. He does not give us that testimony which our soul is longing to receive; he denies those love-smiles and love-visits which our souls are panting for. Unbelief immediately works; and we think it is of no use any more to wait at his footstool, or call upon his name. But after a time, faith begins to lift up its head, and then there is a going out of soul to the Lord, a pleading with him, a wrestling at his blessed footstool, a calling upon his holy name, a determination like one of old, "I will not let you go, except you bless me" Ge 32:26.

2. But waiting also implies humility. "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until he has mercy upon us" Ps 123:2. There is humility in the waiting posture of a servant. And thus, true spiritual waiting upon the Lord is not a pressing forward, like a bold presumptuous claimant; is not an entering with sacrilegious haste into God's sanctuary, nor intruding ourselves at his banquet an unbidden guest; but it implies a knocking at the door, a lying at his feet, a coming to his footstool. It is therefore ever accompanied with this feeling in the heart, that we are to be recipients of mercy; that we have no claim--nothing but beggary, poverty, and rags; and that what the Lord gives, he gives freely to his people as weak and worthless in themselves.

3. But "waiting" implies, besides, continuance and perseverance. It is not a mere calling upon the Lord to help, and then immediately leaving off; looking to him for a moment, and then forgetting him utterly; dividing the heart between God and the creature; expecting help one day from God, another day from man. The very word "wait" implies perseverance and fixed determination in the soul, that to him only will we look. The Lord by his mysterious dealings cuts us off from resting upon an arm of flesh. He will not allow us to lean upon any friend, however near or dear; he will not let us look to any one but himself, for he is a jealous God; and therefore he keeps cutting off link after link, tie after tie, bond after bond; that not having any human comfort, we may seek consolation only in him.

Perseverance implies more or less of a constant waiting upon the Lord. This will therefore go on day after day, week after week, month after month--year after year, the soul will still be waiting upon the Lord. And what for? To receive out of his fullness those communications of grace, mercy, pardon, and peace--those

visitations of his Spirit, those refreshments from his presence, those revivings of faith, hope, and love, those manifestations of his favor, the enjoyment of which the soul is looking for.

What a sweet instance we have of this humble spirit in the Syrophenician woman who craved but a few of the crumbs that fell from the children's table! Mr 7:28 Self-abasement is a sure fruit of the Spirit's teaching in the soul.

VI. Now to such the promise is given--"Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The "youths" and "young men" never wait upon the Lord. Their proud hearts never were humbled to lie at the footstool of mercy; they were wise in their own conceit, and strong in their own strength; they desired no divine testimonies, no love-smiles--in their eyes, these things are nothing but enthusiasm, bigotry, and a wild spirit. Therefore they went on in their own strength, and fell. But the Lord's people, being faint and weary in themselves, and little and lowly in their own eyes, wait upon the Lord; and these, the Lord says, "shall renew their strength;" that is, strength shall be given to them from time to time.

The very expression, "renew their strength," shows there are times and seasons when their strength fails. We cannot walk in the light of past experiences; we cannot fight fresh battles with old strength; we cannot live this week upon last week's food. No; past deliverances will not do for present trials; past consolations will not help us through present struggles; the Lord therefore empties us from time to time of our nature's strength, and then renews our spiritual strength. How sweet and precious it is to have our strength renewed; to have fresh grace brought into the heart--to feel the mysterious sensations of renovated life--to feel the everlasting arms supporting the soul, fighting our battles for us, subduing our enemies, overcoming our lusts, breaking our snares, and delivering us out of our temptations!

How very rough and rugged the path may be to get the blessing! But how much sweeter the blessing is when it has come through that path! How very painful and mysterious it is to flesh and blood to have no strength! But how much sweeter it is when divine strength comes into the heart! For divine strength is of another nature from creature strength. It will not mix with it; it is pure and holy, and therefore will not blend with that which is impure and unholy. But those who "wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength." So that, in new battles they shall have new strength to fight; in fresh temptations, fresh power to overcome them; in present trials and exercises, present grace to grapple with them.

VII. But the text adds, "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." What a contrast! Where have we seen them? Perplexed, distressed, exercised, mourning, and crying. We have seen them so faint and exhausted, that they had no strength to move a step further. We have seen them bowed down with temptations, burdens, trials, perplexities, and difficulties; yet waiting upon the Lord; because they had no other help to go to, no other harbor to anchor in, no other refuge to flee unto. Now--what a contrast! "They shall mount up with wings as eagles"--the strongest, the swiftest, and the highest soaring bird; as though the Lord would take the strongest natural comparison to show how their souls mount up.

But how do they mount up? In faith. It is said of the eagle, that he mounts up towards the sun; and that of all birds, he is the only one which can gaze upon the sun with unshrinking eye. So with faith in the soul. The Lord's people alone can look by faith upon the "Sun of righteousness," gaze upon a glorious Immanuel at the right hand of the Father, and see a precious Jesus ever interceding for them, and drawing them near to his bosom. And when this blessed Jesus communicates a measure of his love and blood to their consciences, and raises up and draws forth faith in his name, then the soul begins to mount up with these wings like eagles, soaring higher and higher, until it comes into the presence of God; mounting up in

higher and higher circles of spiritual flight, until it penetrates into the very sanctuary of Jehovah.

Now, has not your soul thus soared sometimes as upon eagle's wings? Have there not been those communications of divine life and light, those mountings of faith, those anchorings of hope, those goings forth of love, whereby your soul was enabled to mount up and find delight in Jesus, and felt his name, love, and blood precious? Have you not mounted up too, not only in the exercise of living faith and hope, but also of heavenly affection?

Sometimes we are so fastened down to this earth, this valley of tears, this waste howling wilderness--so chained down to it, that we are like a bird with a broken wing, and cannot mount. We are swallowed up in the world, forgetting God and godliness. But are there not times and seasons when the soul is delivered from these chains and fetters--when earthly cares drop off from the mind--when our wings are new moulted, and fresh pinions as it were given--when the world and its temptations, sin and its snares are left behind, and there is a sweet mounting up in the feelings of heavenly affection? This is to "mount up with wings as eagles;" and the soaring soul never ceases to mount until it comes into the very presence of the Three-One God of Israel.

How different the religion of a living soul is from the religion of a dead professor! The religion of a dead professor begins in self, and ends in self--begins in his own wisdom, and ends in his own folly--begins in his own strength, and ends in his own weakness--begins in his own righteousness, and ends in his own damnation. There is in him never any going out of soul after God, no secret dealings with the Lord, no actings of faith upon the divine perfections. But the child of God, though he is often faint, weary, and exhausted with many difficulties, burdens, and sorrows; yet when the Lord does show himself, and renews his strength, he soars aloft, and never ceases to mount up on the wings of faith and love until he penetrates into the very sanctuary of the Most High. A living soul can never be satisfied except in living union and communion with the Lord of life and glory. Everything short of that leaves it empty. All the things of time and sense leave a child of God unsatisfied.

Nothing but vital union and communion with the Lord of life, to feel his presence, taste his love, enjoy his favor, see his glory--nothing but this will ever satisfy the desires of ransomed and regenerated souls. This the Lord indulges his people with. "They shall renew their strength." They shall not be always lying groaning on the ground--not always swooning away through the wounds made by sin--not always chained down by the fetters of the world--not always hunted in their souls like a partridge upon the mountains. There shall be a renewal of their strength; and in their renewal, "they shall mount up with wings as eagles."

VIII. "They shall RUN, and not be weary." What is this running? you say. There are three things spoken of in the text--flying, running and walking; and each of these things is spoken of as found in God's family. Sometimes they fly, when they mount up as upon the wings of eagles; sometimes they run; and sometimes they walk.

But what is it to RUN? David shall explain it. He says, "I will run the way of your commandments when you shall enlarge my heart" Ps 119:32. Paul shall add his testimony; he says, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" Heb 12:1.

To run is to move with cheerfulness and activity in the ways of God; not always crippled by a paralytic limb--not always sinking under the burden of a depraved nature--not always swooning away under wounds, weights, and famine. Sometimes the Lord brings a measure of light, life, and love into the soul. There is then a holy activity, a cheerful obedience, a desire to glorify God, a seeking to know his will and

do it.

This is not like the running of the "youths" and "young men"--in their 'own' strength. They set out in nature's strength, and drop off in nature's weakness. But the Lord's people, "those who wait upon the Lord," renew their strength--"they run, and are not weary." For the Lord's power rests on them. They are like Elijah, who girded up his loins, and ran before king Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel 1Ki 18:46. There was a divine power communicated to the prophet, so that, though the king rode in his chariot, Elijah outran him. So the Lord's people sometimes have strength given them, whereby they can make sacrifices for the Lord, and do his will with a cheerful heart. And in this running they shall not be weary; so long as the Lord communicates strength and supplies power, they are not weary in well-doing.

IX. But there is another word added- "They shall WALK, and not faint." Now walking is next to running, as running is next to flying. Walking implies a steady, progressive pace. It is not the same as the ardent mounting of the soul upwards, nor the cheerful activity of the soul running forward; but it is a calm, steady progression. The Lord sometimes gives his people a heavenly soaring, sometimes an active running, and sometimes a steady walking. All indeed are equally good--whether they fly, run, or walk, it is all to God's glory, and their own profit. When they fly, they would not like to run; when they run, they would not like to walk. They are contented with what they find; for they can only move as he works in them "to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

This walking, then, is a steady progressing in the things of God; a sober persuasion of the truth as it is in Jesus; a calm movement in the ways of the Lord; a living in peace with God, and in peace with his people; a walking in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless; a going onward in that humility, integrity, godly fear, tenderness of conscience--that wariness, circumspectness, and uprightness of heart which become the true believer. Not precipitately running--"he that believes shall not make haste." Nor is it a lagging behind; but a walking soberly and circumspectly in the things of God and truth. This was the happy state of the primitive church, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied" Ac 9:31.

But while they are in this valley of tears, we find the Lord's people in various states and cases. Many of their varied states and cases are traced out in that experimental part of God's word, which is connected with the text. For instance, some are saying, "My judgment is passed over from my God;" I cannot see where the Lord is leading me; all is perplexing, dark and distressing. Others are faint, exhausted, and swooning away through their burdens, difficulties, and perplexities. They cannot move a step further; but still they are in the Lord's path. Others of the Lord's people seem to have "no might," they cannot even read the Word of God at times; they cannot seek the Lord's face, or call upon the Lord's name; they cannot believe, nor hope, nor love; yet they are in the Lord's ways, and are the Lord's people. Others may be waiting upon the Lord, looking to him, pleading with him, wrestling with him, putting their mouth in the dust, and pouring out their hearts before him; yet still in the way of the Lord, and where he would have them to be. Others may be renewing their strength; the Lord is giving them power, and their bow abides in strength; they are renewed with grace in their inner man that they may fight the battles of the Lord. These are where he would have them to be. Others perhaps are mounting up with wings as eagles; they are full of soaring desires, ravished with sweet and precious manifestations of love and blood. These are still where the Lord would have them to be. Others are running in the way of the Lord's commandments; moving actively in the path of cheerful obedience; the whole bent of their will is to glorify God; his will is their will, and they desire to be actively engaged in all that pleases him. Others perhaps are walking; not

mounting with holy affections; not running cheerfully and eagerly; but walking with God in simple obedience to his word, with a tender conscience, desiring to know his will, and do it. This is still the Lord's teaching; they are still in the Lord's way. How different are all and each of these states from being a "youth" or "young man"--an unburdened, unhumbled, unexercised, unplagued professor!

Then, if we be the Lord's people, whatever be our state and case, it will end well--whether having "no might," or "renewing our strength"--whether running or walking, it will all end well. All the Lord's people have these varied dealings through the work of the Spirit upon their hearts; for they shall stand in their lot at the end of the days, and see the Lord face to face in glory!

But woe be to us, if we are "youths" and "young men." You may appear very lovely; your religion may be dressed out in the newest and neatest garb; you may seem to be going on well in your own esteem and that of others. But, depend upon it, if this loveliness, zeal, and activity come from the flesh, it will end in your utter downfall. You will find a day will come, when you will not be able to proceed, and the end will be ruin and destruction.

Now, this does not cut down activity in the Lord's way. It does not cut down lively frames, panting hearts, zealous motives, a single eye to God's glory. God forbid. But it points out the right way.

We must faint first, and have "no might," and be brought to our wit's ends, and then have the Lord's blessings communicated in the Lord's way. All that comes from nature must die. Nature's strength, wisdom, pride, and power must all vanish away, that the glory of the Lamb may endure forever.

Therefore, in this way the Lord cuts down with the sword of the Spirit all that is of nature, and builds up all that is of grace. No more, he does not put down nature's activity, that the soul may be a sluggard; nor does he put down nature's strength, that the soul may be inactive. On the contrary, he extinguishes the candle, that the soul may enjoy the blazing light of the sun. He exhausts all nature's strength, that he may build up his own strength upon its ruins. He puts down the impostor, and raises up the saint. He puts down hypocrisy, and exalts his own truth. He takes the crown off nature's head, and places it upon his Son's. He thus secures to himself all the glory, and to his people all the good.

Thus, while on the one hand, he tarnishes the pride of nature's glory, he secures that his will shall be done on earth as in heaven, and gets to himself a revenue of eternal praise. So that, while viewed with a spiritual eye, we see how it honors God, we see also how suitable it is to man. And in our right mind, we would rather have burdens, exercises, and temptations, to have God with us, and his glory wrought out through them--rather run in the Lord's strength, than be left to our own strength and righteousness.

Thus, we see the Lord will eventually make it manifest that all is done for the good of the church; and all will end to his glory, who, as Father, Son, and eternal Spirit, is worthy of all honor, praise, and adoration, now and evermore.

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