

Introduction:

One of my favorite passages is **Isaiah 40:31**:

But they who wait for 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.

What a picture. As troublesome as life in this world is, I long to mount up on wings like eagles. I long to be strengthened by God so that I might run without growing weary, walk without fainting. However, this doesn't come to everyone. Rather, this strength, this joy, this exhilarating ride with the eagles only comes to those who wait on the Lord. But what does that mean? How do we wait on God? The king of Israel once learned what it meant to wait on the Lord. In **II Kings 6:33**, the king was going to kill God's prophet Elisha, the words of his messenger were, "This trouble is from the Lord! Why should I wait for the Lord any longer?" (ESV). Examine the surrounding story, **II Kings 6:24-7:20**, a story of death, depravation and deliverance. If we learn what it means to wait on the Lord, then, only then, will we soar with the eagles.

Discussion:

- I. No matter what, trust God for deliverance.
 - A. According to **II Kings 6:24-25**, Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, besieged Samaria causing a horrendous famine. As the famine became worse and worse, Israel's king began to despair of help from God. By **II Kings 6:31-33**, he planned to kill Elisha claiming there would be no help from God, in fact the trouble came from Him. But Elisha responded that God would indeed deliver them and that He would do it by the next day (**II Kings 7:1**). The captain on whose hand the king leaned, couldn't believe it. He didn't believe even the Lord could cause such a deliverance (**II Kings 7:2**). However, the rest of **II Kings 7** demonstrates it. God caused the Syrians to hear a racket, believing they were going to be overwhelmed by foreign armies, they fled, leaving behind their supplies for the Israelites to plunder. Waiting on the Lord means always trusting in God for deliverance.
 - B. **Psalms 27:2, 12** speak of receiving protection by God from enemies. **Vs. 14** encourages us to take courage and wait on the Lord. We can trust Him to deliver. **Psalms 31:11-18** provides an even more bleak picture of the attack of enemies. In this psalm, David declared, "I trust in you...my times are in your hand" (**Psalms 31:14, 15**—ESV). He ended with an encouragement to "all you who wait for the Lord" (**Psalms 31:24**—ESV).
 - C. As we trust God, we need to remember the admonition of **Micah 7:5-10**. Our trust must not be in a friend or a neighbor. Our hope must not be in the guidance or deliverance of the worldly. That will never work. Rather, we must wait on God. God is the deliverer. No matter what we face. Whether the snares of the devil, the slander of a co-worker, the betrayal of a friend or the attack of an outright enemy, we must trust God to deliver.
- II. Be patient with God, even through great trouble.
 - A. Simply saying trust God is the easy part. However, waiting on the Lord is more than simply trusting God to deliver. Waiting on God means being patient as you trust God to deliver, even being patient through extreme hardships. The famine of **II Kings 6** was not minimal. It lingered and was drastic. It was so bad women were making deals to eat each other's children (**II Kings 6:28-30**). I can completely understand why Israel's king was ready to give up on deliverance from God. However, the message was that God sometimes waits to deliver for His own reasons. We need simply to trust that in His good time, for His good reasons, God will deliver. We must trust Him even through hardships and wait patiently for His deliverance to come. Never turning away from Him even though His deliverance doesn't come in our time.

- B. **Psalm 69:1-3** provides a picture of deep trouble. David was in deep waters. He had continued to cry out to God such that his throat was parched and dry. His eyes were dim from staying awake to look for the Lord. Yet, he continued to wait on God. Notice another aspect of this waiting for the Lord. It doesn't mean sitting on our thumbs just waiting for Him to finally deliver us. David did not pray once and then sit back and wait for God. He prayed over and over and over again. Jesus teaches this same principle in **Luke 11:5-8**. While waiting on the Lord, we should be intensely praying no matter how hard the times are. How many of us can claim our eyes have become dim because we have stayed awake looking for the Lord's deliverance or our throat has become parched from all they crying out to God we have done? When we are truly waiting patiently on the Lord, our knees will hurt from such praying.
- C. As we wait patiently through our own hardships, we must not be distracted by those who seem to prosper without waiting on the Lord. **Psalm 37:7-9, 34** encourages us to put our patient trust in God even when we see others prospering. In the end, they will be overthrown and we will be rewarded. However, if we turn our back on God and cease to wait on Him, we may enjoy some privilege for a time, but then we will be cut off when God rewards those who waited on Him patiently even through hardship.

III. Trust the Word of the Lord

- A. In **II Kings 7:1**, Elisha said, "Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord..." (ESV). Waiting on the Lord means trusting God by trusting His word. The captain upon whose hand the king leaned did not trust God's word. What God said couldn't possibly happen in his opinion and he was killed for it (**II Kings 7:18-20**). When we wait on God, patiently trusting Him for deliverance, then we take Him at His Word. If He says deliverance is coming in a certain way, we know it is.
- B. According to **Psalm 25:5**, waiting on the Lord is connected to being taught the ways of God and the truth of God. Thus, we cannot truly wait on the Lord if we are ignorant of His Word. If we are not obeying the Lord as we are supposedly waiting on Him to deliver us, then we are not really waiting on the Lord. **Psalm 130:5-6** explains that waiting on the Lord means hoping in His Word. Only people of the Book are truly waiting on the Lord. The rest are just playing at it but are proceeding in their own path without waiting for God.

IV. Fear God, not others

- A. The Israelites feared the Syrians. But in the end, they were no match for God. He sent them packing without even firing a shot (**II Kings 7:6-7**). Sadly, Israel did not fear God. No doubt, God delivered them at this point and on other occasions. However, none of this changed their attitude toward God long term. They continued to live in idolatry and sin. They continued to turn their back on God. God used these kinds of scenarios to get them to realize He alone was God, to turn their fear to Him and their commitment to Him. But they never did. No wonder God finally allowed them to be defeated, destroyed and carried into captivity (**II Kings 17:6-8**).
- B. Look at what God said to Isaiah in **Isaiah 8:11-17**. Don't fear what the people fear, he was told. Fear God and God alone. Then when we fear God, then God will be our refuge and our sanctuary. This foreshadows what Jesus said in **Matthew 10:28**. There is no reason to fear those who can only kill us. Rather, we should fear Him who can punish our souls for eternity. Fear the Lord. When we do, we can actually take comfort in Him as our sanctuary and deliverer. This may seem a paradox. But it is one of the greatest points we need to understand in our day and age. People hate to talk about fearing God. But fearing God is the key to being delivered by God. When we recognize He is the powerful judge who has control over our eternity, in fear we come to Him seeking his mercy and grace. When we come to Him in fear, He gives it to us. Then we do not have to fear His judgment.

V. Repent of any sins

- A. Part of me feels sorry for the captain whose faith was weak in **II Kings 7:2**. I can completely understand why he felt as he did. The situation seemed hopeless and, in his finite mind, he could not imagine how God would accomplish such a deliverance. I empathize with his words because I too have had times of weak faith. However, in this context, I can't help but think about God's words in **Ezekiel 33:11**. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Rather, He

wants the wicked to turn back from their sin and live. He wants them to repent and be victorious through His grace. This captain died needlessly. Even after the declaration of his sentence, he held onto his weak faith. He did not repent. He could have repented and lived. But he did not. Therefore, he died (**II Kings 7:20**).

- B. If we are going to wait on God, we will repent of our sins. One of the things I found most interesting in this study was the times the psalmists talked about waiting on God in the context of repentance. In **Psalm 25:5-7**, David talked about waiting on God and asked God not to remember the sins of his youth. In **Psalm 38:15-18**, he said he would wait on the Lord and explained that he was sorry for his sins. **Psalm 130:3-6** explains the psalmist waited on the Lord because he knew forgiveness was with the Lord and He would not mark their iniquities, but redeem them. We do not wait on God by acting like we are amazing paragons of sinless virtue. Rather, we wait on God by recognizing our own sins, confessing them and repenting of them, seeking mercy from God and the deliverance He offers from sin in His time.

Conclusion:

Are you waiting on God? Do you place your hope and trust for deliverance from all our enemies including sin and Satan in Him? Do you spend time in His word, calling out to Him in prayer and simply doing things His way as you wait for Him to come to your aid? Or are you following your own paths and pursuits because God is not acting the way you want? Remember, if you want to soar on the wings of eagles, you have to wait on God. That may mean times of trouble for a while, but the reward will be worth it.