As an Eagle…So the LORD

Text: Deuteronomy 32:9-12

In October of 1969 a molten moment of decision came in my life. I was sitting in a preaching service at the annual Bible Conference of the college I was attending in Shreveport, Louisiana. I had just entered my first year of college having chosen business administration as my major. This was due to the fact that I had not yet decided my vocation. In my earlier years growing up I was consumed with a military future. As I completed high school in Florida, I had some friends who were suggesting that I join them in a venture to Australia. The goal was to start out by catching a banana boat heading south and hitch rides until we would reach the mighty waves of Australia and surf the largest waves in the world. It is amazing how careless and, at times reckless, youth can be. We should not disdain youthful visions, but rather seize the dreams and ride "the wild horses" into meaningful purpose.

My dad knew of my wanderlust to go to regions beyond my very restricted childhood. He had resigned the church he was pastoring in Florida and taken a teaching position in the college in Louisiana. He asked me to consider going with them and spending at least one year in the college where he was soon to be a professor. I really didn't want to, but I was thankfully heavily influenced by my upbringing to obey the fifth commandment to honor my father and my mother. I agreed.

This brings us back to October 1969 sitting under the preaching of the Word of God. What a great place for an indecisive young man to be. I had heard preaching all my life, but this evening was special because it was as though God was speaking directly to me. The text that was used that night, which I want to share with you today, is Deuteronomy 32:11 and 12: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Two phrases stand out in those two verses: "As an eagle…so the LORD." That night I realized God was "stirring my nest" and wanted to teach me to fly with abandonment into His perfect will for my life. The Bible mentions eagles 32 times in the Scriptures, more than any other bird. God seems to have a heart for the eagle. Today my prayer is that the characteristics of an eagle will not only be inspirational to you, but

that God would use these words as a clarion call from above to follow Him and do His will.

1. THE EAGLE IS BORN FROM ABOVE.

The eagle makes its nest on high. In Job 39:27 God says, “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?” The protective mother and father eagle build their nest in the highest trees and mighty mountains, far away from the lower forms of life such as the serpent that inhabit the lower regions of this earth. Jesus said to the unbelieving skeptics, “…Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23). Not only was the Lord Jesus saying He was Messiah; He was also saying that a birth from above would change the mere mortal man into a child of God. Not long after our Lord said these words, the Bible went on in this same chapter to record, “As He spake these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free” (John 8:30-32). Christ is promising that the one who believes on Him will be free. We are made to be free from the gravity of earth that binds us to a wasteful life, bound in sin that is more incarcerating than the strongest maximum prison. I guess those words of Jesus that day seemed too good to be true so He reminds His listeners, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). This brings me to my next point.

2. THE EAGLE IS MADE FOR THE SKY.

One day a farmer captured a baby eaglet freshly fallen from its nest. For its protection, he placed the infant eagle in a small, retired chicken coop with a screen over the top. For the first few days of its early life, the eagle was content to dwell with the farmer in its tiny pen. Then one day a high soaring eagle flew over the coop with a mighty scream. The young eagle locked its perfect vision on the brother eagle and soon spread his wings imitating the eagle above him. Early the next morning the farmer was awakened by the sound of the eagle flying up and into the screen over the top of the coop. He did not stop. The eagle kept flying up into the screen. The farmer soon learned the eagle was going to hurt itself if he did not remove the screen. As soon as the screen was gone, so was the eagle. He flew high into the air with joyful jubilance. You see, you can take the

eagle out of the sky, but you cannot take the sky out of the eagle. When referring to the transience of material riches, God declared, "…they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Proverbs 23:5b). Solomon said, "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid." The first thing He listed was, "The way of an eagle in the air…."

When the eagle hunts from the air, he is the master. The unsuspecting prey has little time to negotiate an escape. A free-falling object will reach a maximum speed of approximately 144 miles per hour. The eagle can reach speeds of 180 miles per hour in a high-speed dive. The eagle can fly faster than objects can fall. It is interesting to note that a parent eagle can fly faster than a fallen eaglet can fall (Exodus 19:4, Psalm 37:23, 24; Deuteronomy 33:27).

The eagle can be seen flying high above the most ferocious storm, even hurricanes. To escape the turbulence, he rides above it. The sky is friendly to the eagle. He was made for it. The eagle does little flapping; most all of his flight is soaring on the thermals. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 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 40:30, 31).

3. THE EAGLE HAS EXTRAORDINARY VISION.

In a human, the fovea (the center of the field of vision in the eye) has 200,000 cones per millimeter, giving us wonderful vision. In the central fovea of an eagle there are about a million cones per millimeter. That's about the same number of visual cells as some of the finest computer monitors have on its entire screen when set at its highest resolution. An eagle can spot a rabbit two miles away. Humans see just three basic colors; eagles see five. You rarely see an eagle hunting at night because eagles do not have good night vision. What helps them see more colors during the day hurts them at night. This is a reminder that, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Thessalonians 5:5). Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he."

Although the eagle has different ways of defense and protecting its territory, one of the most effective ways the eagle fights its enemy

is his partnership with the sun. When the eagle is under attack from other birds, he has a gift. God has equipped him with a third eyelid called the nictitating membrane that allows him to withstand the harsh rays of the sun. So when under attack, he heads straight for the sun and his enemy loses sight of the eagle in the full glare of the sun. We as Christians need to always remember that like the eagle, we should never let our enemies come between the Son of God and us.

4. THE EAGLE HAS THE ABILITY TO BE RENEWED.

What a glorious promise is afforded us in Scripture. Psalm 103 begins by blessing the LORD. He is to be blessed for all His benefits such as forgiveness of sins and healing of diseases. Then it is pointed out that God is to be blessed, “Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psalm 103:4,5).

I discovered in research that the process of an eagle’s maturity is about five years. When it is born it is fluffy and white, much like the color of the soft downy feathers that line the nest. As it grows, its feathers become dark, serving as camouflage. Then as it becomes fully matured, its bright and beautiful colors are in glorious display. Now the eagle can defend itself and no longer needs the camouflage of youth. The full color of maturity also announces that it is of breeding age. And when the eagle mates, it mates for life; it will only take another mate if the original one dies.

In Psalm 103:4, 5 God teaches us the power of renewal and refreshing. May we pray with the psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10) Paul said, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:23). “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10).

God declared, “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself” (Exodus 19:4). God brought Israel out of Egypt as a parent protecting her immature child, but once in Canaan (the Promised Land), we are to become mature and be ready for renewal when needed. God help us to grow in grace, take to the spiritual heights and reproduce.

-Pastor Pope-