

## POWER GIVEN TO THE FAINT

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"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 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 40:29-31

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 sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid 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 shew 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 hid 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—"Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" However thou mayest faint, however thou mayest be wearied of him—whatever be thy hard thoughts concerning his dealings with thee—dost thou not know, that the everlasting God remains "the same yesterday, today, and for ever"—that he is not a changeable God, tossed to and fro like thyself; but that he "rests in his love," and is ever the same;—that "he fainteth not" under the burdens which thou castest upon him; "neither is weary" of thee, though thou art often weary of him? And, with respect to this intricate path in which thou art walking, he adds, "There is no searching of his understanding." He knoweth what is best for thee; and though thy present path is dark and obscure in thine eyes, it is bright and clear in his.

He would, therefore, urge this upon the conscience of his exercised and complaining child, 'Thy part is to sit still, and wait till the deliverance appear; in due time, I will explain to thee 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 giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 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."

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, endeavour this morning to trace out these two distinct **characters,** and shew 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 shew what is **their allotted portion and appointed destiny.**

I.—By the expression "**youths**" and "**young men**" is implied a contrast betwixt the whole-hearted condition of the professing world and the fainting state of God's family. Youth is the season of comeliness, vigour, 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 comeliness, activity, and vigour. 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 vigour. 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 comeliness, youthful vigour, 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 comeliness 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 their smooth and ruddy cheeks, 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.)

vii. And so with respect to the activity, strength, and vigour 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 comeliness—those fleshly

substitutes for vital power and godliness—which the exercised family of God once had, but have long lost.

There are those amongst the Lord's family "whose senses are not as yet exercised to discern both good and evil," and therefore cannot see the difference between pretence and reality, between nature in its highest form and grace in its lowest. When therefore one of these poor, burdened, exercised children of God contrasts his own want 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 comeliness, strength, and vigour! 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 worshipper 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 comely 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 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 comely and vigorous "youths" and "young men"—these active professors of religion—these unhumiliated 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 shewing that they have been feeding upon ashes; and that a deceived heart has turned them aside; that they have had no 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 his 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 comely, 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 honoured 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 unhumiliated and professors. **"He giveth 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 them that 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 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 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" (Am. 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 fulness, 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 till thoroughly emptied—that there is no deliverance till shut up in prison—no mercy till brought into misery—no manifested laying of the everlasting arms underneath the soul till it is ready to sink into the awful precipice of perdition! But were it not so, we should 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 labour**—but when at length the soul is brought into that state of poverty and destitution so as not to have a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or water out of the pit—then it is fit to receive **power**. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." They are not fit to receive God's strength till 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 giveth 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 thy holy temple" (John 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: "And they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die" (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 give 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 fulfilment in the soul of the experience described by the prophet, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth 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" (Lam. 3:21). And as she pleads,

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon"? 'Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?' (Isa. 51:9, 10). This is putting the Lord in remembrance (Isa. 43:26); and a making use of past favours to plead with him for more.

IV.—But there is another word added, **"And to them that have no might he increaseth 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 increaseth strength."** It does not say, he gives, bestows, communicates strength; but "he **increaseth** 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 **increaseth** strength." As though it would imply, 'Is not the very power to sink down into creature weakness, helplessness, and nothingness, **strength?**' It is so in God's mysterious dealings. And therefore, "to them that 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 increaseth strength."

Now the Lord "increaseth strength" in a very mysterious way. He often drops strength stilly and secretly into the soul. We are not always to expect very great manifestations. 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 bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth" (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 shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 14:8).

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 headstrong 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 should 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 should 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 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 honour and glory to his own great name. He thus secures the salvation of his people by his own free grace; and whilst he hides pride from their eyes, he saves them by the only way that is suitable to them, and glorifying to himself.

V.—"**But they that 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 fulness 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 that 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 thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 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 that he have 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.

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 suffer 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 fulness 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 favour, 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! (Mark 7:28) Self-abasement is a sure fruit of the Spirit's teaching in the soul.

Now to such the promise is given: "They that 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 wanted no divine testimonies, no love-smiles; these in their eyes were 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,**" shews there are times and seasons when their strength fails. We cannot walk in the light of past testimonies; 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. 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 that "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 exercises, present grace to grapple with them.

VI.—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 harbour 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 shew 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, till it comes into the presence of God; mounting up in higher and higher circles of spiritual flight, till 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 vale 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 till 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 shew himself, and renews his strength, he soars aloft, and never ceases to mount up on the wings of faith and love till 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 favour, see his glory—nothing but this will ever satisfy the wants 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."

2. **"They shall run, and not be weary."** (Isa. 40:31.) 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 thy commandments when thou shalt 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, "they that 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 (1 Kin. 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.

3. 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 run; when they run, they would not 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 believeth 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 Ghost, were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

But whilst they are in this vale 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, un-humbled, 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 comely; your religion may be dressed out in the newest and nearest garb; you may seem to be going on well in your own esteem and that of others. But, depend upon it, if this comeliness, 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 for ever.

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. Nay 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 taper, 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, whilst viewed with a spiritual eye, we see how it honours 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 honour, praise, and adoration, now and evermore.