

**Pastor Paul Bawden  
Grace Evangelical Church  
Sunday, June 27, 2010  
"The Glorious All Sufficient One"  
Ezekiel 17**

**The eagle is one of the largest and most powerful birds in the world.**

**It's body length** varies from 35-37 inches.

**It's wing span** is from 79-90 inches.

**It weighs** from 10-14 pounds.

The eagle can live longer **than 30 years.**

**Once paired,** the eagles remain together for life.

**Due to its wing span,** the eagle can soar. To reduce turbulence in flight, the tips of its wings are tapered so that when the eagle flies the tips are separated.

**An eagle can fly at an altitude of 10,000 feet.** It can achieve speeds of 30-35 miles an hour as it moves in on its prey. To help the eagle soar, the eagles use thermals, which are rising currents of warm air and updrafts by terrain, such as a valley edge or mountain slope.

**The tail** of the eagle is very important for flight and maneuvering. While the bald eagle is soaring or gliding in flight, the tail feathers are spread in order to attain the largest surface area and increase the effect of thermals and up-drafts. The tail also helps to brake the eagle when landing and assists in stabilization during a controlled dive or swoop toward prey. The strength of the feathers and the follicles holding the feathers is quite impressive while watching the tail move back and forth and up and down during maneuvers.

**Bald eagles have 7,000 feathers.** Eagle feathers are lightweight yet extremely strong, hollow yet highly flexible. They protect the bird from the cold as well as the heat of the sun, by trapping layers of air. To maintain its body temperature an eagle simply changes the position of its feathers. While an eagle suns itself on a cold morning, it ruffles and rotates its feathers so that the air pockets are either opened to the air or drawn together to reduce the insulating effect. Feathers also provide waterproofing and protection, and are crucial for flight.

**Feather structure makes pliability possible.** Overlapping feathers can form a dense covering, which the birds can open or close at will. The bald eagle has several layers of feathers, each serving a different function. Under the outer layer of feathers is an inner layer of down or smaller feathers. The inter locking of feathers is an astonishing design of nature. The feathers enable eagles to live in extremely cold environments. Eagles do not have to migrate to warmer areas each year to fulfill temperature requirements, they migrate to available food supplies.

**And as you know, the eagle is our country's national emblem** representing freedom which the eagle has as it soars in unlimited freedom above the mountain tops and into the boundless spaces beyond.

Since God created this majestic bird, it is no wonder, then, in our text that God used Ezekiel to teach the nation of Israel in captivity through the parable or illustration by comparison of the eagle. In fact God directs Ezekiel to use the illustration of two eagles to tell those in captivity what God has in mind for the nation of Israel.

**I. The two eagles set forth – Ezekiel 17:1-10.**

**1. First eagle – 17:1-6.**

The first great eagle came to Lebanon and took away the top of the cedar – plucked off the top most of the young twigs and brought it to a land of merchants. He set it in a city of traders.

He also took some seed and planted it in fertile soil. He placed it beside abundant waters; he set it like a willow. Then it sprouted and became low, spreading vine with its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches.

## **2. Second eagle – 17:7-10.**

A second great eagle came and the vine bent its roots toward him and sent out its branches toward him from the beds where it was planted, that he might water it. Verse 8 says that it was planted in good soil beside abundant waters, that it might yield branches and bear fruit and become a splendid vine.

God asks this question (17:9). Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers – so that all its sprouting leaves wither?

God asks a second time (17:10). Will it thrive? Will it not completely wither as soon as the east wind strikes it – wither on the beds where it grew?

What's God saying here to Israel through the action of these two eagle parables.

## **II. The interpretation given of the two eagles – Ezekiel 17:11-21.**

### **1. First eagle represented Nebuchadnezzar (11-14).**

In 597 B.C., He came and took the top most twigs – Jehoiachin from Judah to Babylon (II Kings 24:8-16; 25:27-30)

Then (17:5-6), Nebuchadnezzar set up Zedekiah as a puppet king in Judah.

### **2. The second eagle represented Egypt attracting Zedekiah (12-21).**

Zedekiah was attracted to Egypt, who rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar (15-19). Zedekiah would be taken captive and die in Babylon, and his troops would be defeated. This would be the third deportation of Israel to Babylon in 586 B.C.

This final deportation of Israel to Babylon was probably a few years from the time of Ezekiel's prophecy here. He was the messenger of God to tell the people what would happen.

In spite of God disciplining Israel for the nation's rebellion against Him, He has not cast off His people whom He knew.

For in the midst of the sending Israel into captivity for their disobedience to Him, He tells Israel through Ezekiel that there is hope, there is still a future for Israel. In the midst of God's judgment, there is mercy and grace.

**In fact, as these two eagles represented nations with power who were against God, the biblical God is the Supreme Ruler, yes, the Supreme EAGLE.**

**What does the Supreme EAGLE have to say to Israel and to all the other nations that are against HIM?**

## **III. God (the supreme Eagle) provides mercy and grace in the midst of judgment (Ezekiel 17:22-24).**

God says that He has His TENDER ONE (A SPRIG – small shoot – the Messiah, Jesus Christ). God will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. It shall be planted on the high mountain of Israel, and it will bring forth fruit as a stately cedar. All the trees, all the nations will know that God brings down the high tree, the proud tree (nation), exalts the low tree (Israel at this time) dries up the green tree (nations in power over Israel at this time), and makes the dry tree flourish (Israel will flourish once more). I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform it."

**Ezekiel is giving Israel the same message as the other prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and later Zechariah.**

**Isaiah told Israel as He prophesied to them of coming judgment.**

(11:1) – “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit (Even though David is gone physically, out of his family – his father Jesse) would come a shoot or branch – even though it looked like the promise to David would not be fulfilled, God had not forgotten His promise of the Messiah and Savior to come.

**Jeremiah prophesied these words in the midst of coming judgment on Israel.**

(23:5) – “Behold the days are coming declares the LORD when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.”

(33:15) – “In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.

**Zechariah agreed with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.**

(3:8) – “Behold I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.”

(6:12) – “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is and He will build the temple of the LORD.”

So what is God telling His people about this TENDER ONE, this shoot that will come and eventually reign in power restoring Israel to her God-given position in the world.

**1. There is the unique (eternal) person of the TENDER ONE – OF JESUS CHRIST.**

**(1) As the little sprig or sprout, He will come insignificantly. This speaks of Christ’s incarnation – His humble birth in a stable and growing up in the carpenter’s home in Nazareth.**

**(2) He would be stately – tall cedar.**

This speaks to Christ’s strength and power as a grown man.

He would not just be the sinless man – He would be the God-man – the two natures united in Him.

Jesus’ person would be unique.

Oswald Chambers has this to say about the character of Jesus Christ.

1. No word He spoke needed to be modified or withdrawn, because He never spoke inadvisedly or fell into the evil of exaggeration.
2. He never apologized for word or action, and yet, is it not true that the ability to apologize is one of the elements of true greatness.
3. He confessed no sin. The holiest men of all ages have been the most abject in their confession of shortcoming and failure. Jesus invited the closest investigation and scrutiny of His life by friend and foe. “Which of you convinces me of sin?” (John 8:46).
4. Because that was the case, he never asked for pardon.
5. He never sought advice from even the wisest men of His day.
6. He was at no pains to justify ambiguous conduct, as for example when He lay sleeping in the stern of the boat in the midst of a raging storm, apparently indifferent to the fears of His companions. Jesus volunteered no explanation, offered no apology (Mark 4:37-41).
7. Jesus never asked or permitted prayer for Himself. True, He invited His three intimates to watch with Him, but not to pray for Him. Their prayer was to be for themselves lest they enter into temptation (Matthew 26:36-46).
8. Jesus’ character was complete in itself. He entered on life with anything but a passionless simplicity of nature; yet it was a complete and finished character with entire moral adulthood. Most men are notable for one conspicuous grace such as Moses for meekness, Job for patience, John for love. But in Jesus you find everything. He is always consistent in Himself. No act or word contradicts anything that has gone on before. The character of Christ is one and the same throughout. He makes no improvements, prunes no extravagances, returns from no eccentricities. Its balance is never disturbed or readjusted. He had a strange mixture of dependence and independence. Joyousness and seriousness blended in Him in perfect naturalism.

## **2. There is the unique (eternal) work of the TENDER ONE – JESUS CHRIST.**

### **1. He would be planted on the high mountain (Mt Zion – Jerusalem).**

For that to happen Christ would not only live a perfect life in total fellowship with His heavenly Father, but He also had to pay the penalty for our sin, which is death. He would come and die on Calvary's mountain.

That's why Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20 concerning Jesus, "Who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Mark 10:45 – He gave His life a ransom for many.

Romans 3:26 – The Just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.

This is the great teaching of substitution. Jesus died in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, which is death, then He was buried, and conquered the grave bodily to demonstrate that God's holiness was satisfied and sin's penalty had been paid.

There may be different ideas about the salvation or atonement but there is only one biblical doctrine, the doctrine of substitution. It is not saving a life by mere assistance, like throwing a rope to a drowning man. It is not even risking one's life to save another. Rather substitution is the saving of one life by the loss of another. Jesus became sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be declared righteous before Him by faith in HIM.

The cross is not a compromise, but a substitution.

Not a cancellation but a satisfaction.

Not a wiping off but a wiping out in blood, agony, and death.

Thus mercy does not cheat justice.

### **2. He would bring forth fruit.**

Christ's salvation will bring eternal life and His forgiveness to those who accept Him as personal Savior. He will be their shepherd providing His leading, His care, His provision. There will be no doubt that He is the LORD. Christ's gospel would go to the Jews and Gentiles, and they would make up His church, which would start at Pentecost.

Eventually, Christ will come in the air for His church. There will be 7 years of tribulation on the earth. Then Christ will come to earth at the end of the tribulation time to put down all rule and rebellion and establish His 1000 year on earth.

Although many of Israel would return to their land under the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C, and the Temple would be rebuilt and the walls rebuilt of the city of Jerusalem under Zerrubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, Israel would not have its prominence in God's program as it once had. In fact the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70. Even though Israel became a recognized state in 1948, Israel still doesn't have fully the land God has promised to them in the time of Abraham. But when Christ returns at the end of the tribulation time, He will fulfill completely this prophecy in our text today in Ezekiel 17:23-24.

## **IV. Application to our lives.**

### **1. Praise God for His amazing dealings with the nation of Israel.**

When God brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage and they came to Mt Sinai, God told Israel this through His servant Moses.

"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself."

In Moses' song, Exodus 32:11, he refers to the eagle again and how God stirred up His people like an eagle does to get its young out of the nest, and then spreads its wings and catches them and carries them on His pinions. So God has protected and cared for His people over the years.

Although God cared for and protected Israel like an eagle, the nation rebelled against God. Now God was sending two other eagles to bring His judgment and discipline on the nation for their disobedience.

But, God has not rejected the nation completely. He is telling those in captivity in Babylon that He is still the all-powerful EAGLE – the ALL SUFFICIENT ONE!! Eventually the twig will come and will eventually restore Israel to

her land and former glory to be a witness for Him. In fact in Revelation 12:14, Israel is given to wings of an eagle, during the tribulation time, to get away from Satan's persecution, stressing God's protection of His people.

The biblical God is certainly the EAGLE with all power. He will put down the proud nations (the little eagles) and establish His kingdom giving Israel her God-given position with the LORD. Even though Israel went after other false eagles, God is still the faithful eagle who will bring Israel into fellowship with Himself again.

That complete restoration of Israel to her homeland spiritually and physically is still yet future. At the same time, Paul in Romans 11:33-36 gives God the glory for His gracious dealings with His people Israel.

What about God's dealings with us right now?

## **2. Praise God for His amazing dealings with us today.**

The TENDER ONE IS SAYING TO US COME UNTO HIM AND HE WILL GIVE US REST FOR OUR SOULS, HE WILL PROVIDE US HIS LIVING ETERNAL WATER, HIS ETERNAL LIFE (John 7:37-39).

(1) Today is the day of salvation

II Corinthians 6:2).

(2) Today is the day to live for Jesus Christ!

Philippians 1:21

(3) Find that MY grace is sufficient for your every need.

II Corinthians 12:9. Yes, MY power is perfected in weakness.

(4) Indeed, wait on ME, for they that wait on me shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

Isaiah 40:31 is one of my favorite verses, perhaps one of yours as well.

We are told to wait on the LORD. To have our trust in Him and His plans for us.

As we trust in the LORD, we will renew our strength. RENEW means to exchange our strength for God's strength. We find our power in the indwelling Holy Spirit.

As we exchange our strength for God's strength we will mount up with wings as eagles.

The eagle uses the turbulent winds, the updrafts, to fly higher, giving him a greater view, above harassment, using less effort, and he can fly faster. As we encounter the challenges and adversities in life, these turbulent winds, don't cause us to lose heart, but to keep trusting our Lord more so that His life is apparent in us.

In Christ's power, the believer can turn the negatives in life into a positive witness of Christ's love and grace.

In Christ's power the believer can keep running the race – be consistent and goal focused (on Christ). The believer will also walk (spiritually), and not faint –that is in the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer will keep vitally alive in Christ to not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but show forth the very character of Christ. When we do sin and fail HIM, we confess our sin to the Lord, thank Him for His forgiveness and move on.

### **And how do we keep following hard after Christ?**

By keeping a tender, teachable spirit toward the TENDER ONE – The twig – who is also the ultimate EAGLE.

**That's how our LORD is to us. He is tender. He is kind and forgiving. We must do the same.**

**We are to be kind, tender hearted, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ's also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32).**

In fact the word, kind, implies affection for those who are our own flesh and blood. The world says that we can win by intimidation. God's love suffers long and is kind.

Our tolerance can wear thin. We need to take our grievances to the Lord instead of taking it out on others.

**Vance Havner used to say, "A bulldog can beat a skunk any day, but it just isn't worth it."**

Kindness is constant in the face of neglect, ignorance, lack of appreciation, and even undeserved violence.

**Sometimes it's good to have a reminder of what kindness is all about as we demonstrate our Lord's graciousness, His courteousness, and His respect for others. Mrs. Hartley, a grandmother of four has this to say.**

**When we are gracious, we show kindness and warmth.**

\*Ask, "May I please?"

\*Respond, "Thank you!"

\*Say, "Excuse me, " or "Sir" Or "Ma'am?" when we haven't heard wha was say.

\*Say, "Excuse me," when we walk in front of someone.

**When we are courteous, we show good manners toward others.**

\*Open and hold doors for others.

\*Assist others with coats or packages.

\*Walk nearest the outside, or curb,, of the sidewalk.

\*Carry an open umbrella for another.

\*Stand aside and permit women to enter an elevator first.

\*Give up our seat to an older person or a woman on a bus or subway.

**When we are considerate, we are thoughtful and attentive.**

\*Don't whisper in front of others.

\*Don't tell secrets confided to us.

\*Don't gossip or tattle.

\*Don't crack knuckles, pop gum or crunch ice publicly.

\*Promptly return what we borrow and in good condition.

\*Never draw attention to those who are different.

\*Are prompt for appointments.

\*Pick up things that don't belong on the floor.

\*Go up and down stairs quietly.

**When we are respectful, we admire and appreciate others.**

\*Never contradict our parents (or our spouse) in public.

\*Show proper respect for elders and all those in authority.

\*Give others the same respect we appreciate from them/

\*Make everyone in our presence comfortable.

**Yes the TENDER ONE – Jesus Christ wants us to depend on His power to be Tender toward Him and tender and kind toward others.**

**That is really trusting in the GLORIOUS ALL SUFFICIENT ONE, the supreme EAGLE. In so doing we can fly like an eagle.**

**John Maxwell has this for a title in his great little book, "The Winning Attitude." It goes like this.**

**"It's Hard To Soar With The Eagles When You Have To Live With The Turkeys."**

Maxwell's thrust is that we let our environment in which we live condition us to think like the world, to live for self, to not want to change, to keep the status quo, and live a life of comfort and ease.

But when you live for Christ the whole landscape changes. We go forth to soar like the eagle, willing in Christ's power to turn the negatives into positives, have His vision, and willing to step out and show His kindness to believers and unbelievers for His glory.

**Let's soar with the eagles, trusting in the Glorious All-Sufficient One – The Supreme EAGLE.**

In that process let us praise HIM as Paul did for His plan for Israel and for us today, His church.

**Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. . . . For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To HIM be glory forever. AMEN.**