

## Stirring Up The Nest

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, May 1st 2022

William J. Long was a naturalist who would watch eagles for weeks on end and record the details of their behavior. And even though his fascinating book has been long out of print, it was recently republished in ebook format, and I downloaded a copy two weeks ago.<sup>1</sup> And I want to read you his description of a mother eagle trying to teach her young eaglet to fly. After giving a lot of background of what had been happening on the previous days, he said,

One day, when I came to the little thicket on the cliff where I used to lie and watch the nest through my glass, I found that one eaglet was gone. The other stood on the edge of the nest, looking down fearfully into the abyss, whither, no doubt, his bolder nest mate had flown, and calling disconsolately from time to time. His whole attitude showed plainly that he was hungry and cross and lonesome. Presently the mother-eagle came swiftly up from the valley, and there was food in her talons. She came to the edge of the nest, hovered over it a moment, so as to give the hungry eaglet a sight and smell of food, then went slowly down to the valley, taking the food with her, telling the little one in her own way to come and he should have it. He called after her loudly from the edge of the nest, and spread his wings a dozen times to follow. But the plunge was too awful; his heart failed him; and he settled back in the nest, and pulled his head down into his shoulders, and shut his eyes, and tried to forget that he was hungry. The meaning of the little comedy was plain enough. She was trying to teach him to fly, telling him that his wings were grown and the time was come to use them; but he was afraid.

In a little while she came back again, this time without food, and hovered over the nest, trying every way to induce the little one to leave it. She succeeded at last, when with a desperate effort he sprang upward and flapped to the ledge above, where I had sat and watched him with Old Whitehead. Then, after surveying the world gravely from his new place, he flapped back to the nest, and turned a deaf ear to all his mother's assurances that he could fly just as easily to the tree-tops below, if he only would.

Suddenly, as if discouraged, she rose well above him. I held my breath, for I knew what was coming. The little fellow stood on the edge of the nest, looking down at the plunge which he dared not take. There was a sharp cry from behind, which made him alert, tense as a watch-spring. The next instant the mother-eagle had swooped, striking the nest at his feet, sending his support of twigs and himself with them out into the air together.

He was afloat now, afloat on the blue air in spite of himself, and flapped lustily for life. Over him, under him, beside him hovered the mother on tireless wings, calling softly that she was there. But the awful fear of the depths and the lance

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15950/15950-h/15950-h.htm>

tops of the spruces was upon the little one; his flapping grew more wild; he fell faster and faster. Suddenly—more in fright, it seemed to me, than because he had spent his strength—he lost his balance and tipped head downward in the air. It was all over now, it seemed; he folded his wings to be dashed in pieces among the trees. Then like a flash the old mother-eagle shot under him; his despairing feet touched her broad shoulders, between her wings. He righted himself, rested an instant, found his head; then she dropped like a shot from under him, leaving him to come down on his own wings. A handful of feathers, torn out by his claws, hovered slowly down after them.

It was all the work of an instant before I lost them among the trees far below. And when I found them again with my glass, the eaglet was in the top of a great pine, and the mother was feeding him.

This mother eagle brought a painful disturbance into the young eaglet's life in order to teach it to fly. And the clear implication of Deuteronomy 32:11 is that God does exactly that to us. If you have faced disturbances and distresses in your life, there are three issues that you need to look at: Properly interpreting them, properly responding to them, and choosing to rejoice in them.<sup>2</sup>

## I. Am I Properly Interpreting The Disturbances In My Life?

Like this mother eagle, God often brings disturbances into our lives in order to launch us out into His will for our lives. Sadly, we often misinterpret those things as if God doesn't care. But He does. Israel complained because of God's dealings with her, but God said to them, "I did it because I loved you." God knows that we don't like the disturbance, but He also knows that it is in our best interests. The question is, do we see these disturbances as God's loving lessons in our life? Do we try to learn from them and ask, "Lord, what are you teaching me?" And are we actually benefiting from the lessons?

Job reflected on the lesson of disturbance that God had brought to him and realized that before all of that came he had been thinking (and this is a quote of his thoughts in Job 29:18),

"I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days as the sand. My root is spread out to the waters, and the dew lies all night on my branch. My glory is fresh within me, and my bow is renewed in my hand." (Job 29:18)

He had become comfortable in his nest. He thought that he had it made and life could not be better and he uses these illustrations to describe that. He wanted to stay right where he was the rest of his life. He said, "I will die in my nest" but God kicked him out of his nest

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the thoughts in this sermon were inspired by a sermon T. S. Rendall gave at Prairie Bible School in the 1970s.

because God wanted Job to grow and stretch his wings of faith. He had something much better for Job.

### A. Historical Background

It was the same with Israel. Let me give a bit of historical background. God was here describing the disturbances that He had brought into Israel's life in order to get Israel to move out of the land of Egypt. The people of Israel may have complained plenty about the slavery in Egypt, but they were not willing to take the responsibilities and risks and dangers that come along with freedom. Even after they left the nest of Egypt they on more than one occasion longed to go back to Egypt and even longed to be able to eat the leeks and garlics of Egypt because it was tiring and wearisome trying to learn how to fly, and sometimes it was scary. Freedom can be scary to those with a slave mentality. Here is what Exodus 6, verse 1 says:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."

That is an interesting verse that illustrates what it took to get the Israelites to leave their nest. That verse says that God had to drive them out of their nest. He had to as it were, kick them out of the nest. I would like to ask ourselves three questions in this connection:

### B. Do I see the necessity for God's lessons of disturbance?

First, are we convinced that leaving the nest and following the Lord's promptings is a necessary thing. We know that it is essential for the eaglet to leave the nest, but we may not see it that way for us for a couple of reasons. Why was the young eaglet nervous? The old home was all that the eaglet had ever known. We can easily have that problem as well. We can get very comfortable with our old ways of doing things and find God's call of obedience to be too stressful. The status quo seems more comfortable. We are just not used to doing things that way, and so we do not change.

Or it may be that the eaglet was afraid of launching out into the unknown, untried territory. It felt insecure. How often are we kept from God's best because, though we make efforts at flapping our wings and fluttering around the edge of the nest, we never have the courage to take the plunge. If you are one of those who does not like to change, or who is insecure and afraid of change, then you need to be convinced of the absolute necessity of following the coaxings of God as the Scriptures call us to make changes in our lives. God would not ask us to make those changes if it was not necessary. It was hard for Israel to see the need for leaving their nest without the slavery and cruel bondage that God allowed to take place. If they *had* been quick learners, they would *not have had to go through so much*. And it is the same with us. So the first question that I am asking is, "Do we see the necessity for God's lessons of disturbance?" Those disturbances he brings into our lives could be disease, financial stress, the pain of other people's treatment of us, etc. And though it was painful at the time, we can look back and say, "No, I'm glad that God moved us out of our nest. I wouldn't want to have to go through that again, but I am glad that it happened."

### C. Do I understand the methods God uses?

The second question is, “Do we understand the methods God uses to stir up the nest?” The naturalist that I quoted showed various ways in which the mother eagle stirred up the young. She tried to coax and prod and push, and when that failed, she flew down with speed and knocked the eaglet off of its perch. A. A. Maclaren, the famous Scottish preacher said, “And to stir up the nest means to make a man uncomfortable where he is.” At the beginning of the year I showed you what my life map looked like. And the pastor who mentored me through that had me highlight the painful things of my past life, and then he showed me how there were groupings of these painful things before each transition of life that God was moving me through. Those events were making me ready to make that transition. And my mentor has found a similar pattern in the thousands of people he has coached - with some people needing more pain than others. God brings stress and pain when he is seeking to transition us out of our comfortable nest and into a new stage of life.

George Whitfield once said, “whenever I am tempted to settle down, God puts a thorn in my nest.” He can do it by illness, sorrow, pressure, pain, betrayal by friends, disappointment, distress, misery, or calamities of one sort or another. I talked with a man once who thought it abominable to say that it was God’s will that a person get sick, or die or have a calamity. He said that God would never have His hand in any of those bad things. He said that it was Satan *alone* who was behind it, and God’s hands were somehow tied. But tell me: is it not much more comforting to believe with faithful Hannah (and let me quote her),

The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap." (1 Sam. 2:6-8)

If we believe that the world is out of God’s control than we have no consolation that the things we meet in life are not just irrational, meaningless, hopeless events. We can’t get comfort by saying that God does not control these things. Much better to believe the comfort of the Scripture promise that God is using all things to work together for good, including the difficult things. God can use any event in your life that makes you uncomfortable to be an event that stirs you out of your nest to trust Him for great things. If we do not have a reckless trust in the Lord and abandon ourselves to His clearly revealed will in Scripture; if we do not jump out of the nest ourselves, God will have to bring disturbances of one sort or another into our lives to stir us into action. It’s much better to jump like the first eaglet, but some people are slow learners and they need much more pain than others. Perhaps He has already begun to stir the nest a bit for you, and rather than flying you are tenaciously hanging on wondering what in the world the Lord is up to. The quicker you let go, the quicker you will be able to experience the thrill of flying with God as your coach and finding him always beside you ready to bear you up on His wings.

### D. Do I realize that God always has a purpose?

Another question that is worth asking is, “Do I realize that God always has a purpose for everything He brings into my life?” You could think of that purpose as teaching us to fly. He doesn’t want us to be a baby and immature all of our lives. He doesn’t want us sitting in our

nest only able to walk. He wants us to mature; to fly; to soar to ever greater heights of spiritual service. God is never arbitrary when He allows difficulties in our lives. He brings those to mature us in Jesus Christ. So we have looked at three questions under point # 1 - interpreting God's disturbances in our life.

## II. Am I properly Responding To God's Lesson Of Disturbance?

The second main point is properly responding to God's lessons of disturbance. I've already hinted at this matter of response, but in order to do so properly we need to have three things in our life:

### A. Utter Abandonment to His Will

First, we need to utterly abandon ourselves to God's will. I think that Queen Esther was an excellent example of this. She was willing to do God's will even if it meant her death. If God told her to jump out of the nest by asking king Xerxes to reverse his decree of death on the Jews, she was willing to do it. Her uncle Mordecai told her God had placed her in this position, and that meant that she had a responsibility to God and to others. He said, "Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" She agreed and her reply included the classic statement, "If I perish, I perish!" O.K.? "I don't care what happens. I'm going to do God's will." Utter abandonment to God's will. We are all called to that.

### B. Complete Confidence in God

Second, we need to replace doubts with complete confidence in God. These verses trace God's perfect providence. This is not just confidence in His existence, but it is confidence that God knows what He is doing, that He is faithful to His promises, and that He does indeed love us. We need the confidence to know that when we offer up our bodies as a living sacrifice to God that we will indeed discover what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. Notice those adjectives in Romans 12:2. His will is good, acceptable and perfect. Having confidence that that is true will enable us to learn lessons from our disturbances rather than complaining about them. Walking by faith rather than by sight is much like a young eaglet learning to fly. We have the guidance of God's word calling us to duty, but until we launch out in faith and put God to the test, we won't experience Him bearing us up on eagle's wings. We've got to have that confidence and faith. Paul calls this the obedience of faith.

### C. Absolute Love to God

The third response is absolute love for God. The rest of Deuteronomy 32 goes on to relate how despite God's good provisions for Israel they were not grateful. The best thing that a parent could hope for when there is discipline is that the child would grow up to love and appreciate all that the parent has done for him. If we learn our lesson of disturbance well we will thank God and express our love for Him that He did not give us the easy way out, but He gave us the way that was for our best. Which brings us to the last point.

### III. Am I Perpetually Rejoicing In God's Lessons Of Disturbance?

The third main point that I want to draw from this verse is, "Am I perpetually rejoicing in God's lessons of disturbance?" The chapter from which this verse is taken is actually a long song of praise from Moses lips. *Moses* had learned to rejoice in God's disturbances rather than seeing them as calamities. But he gave that song to teach *Israel* to sing and to rejoice. We can rejoice perpetually when we see these things as indicators of God's personal plan, His powerful presence, and His skillful protection. Those three things make us approach our disturbances more like a roller coaster than a fall off a cliff. Though the adrenaline still flows on a roller coaster, we know we will get through it and can rejoice. So let's look at each of those three things.

#### A. God's personal plan

First, God has a personal plan. His personal plan for us can be seen in a similar verse dealing with the eagle in Exodus 19:4 where God said,

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine."

In God's covenant and His vast plans for His kingdom that He wants us to participate in fully, we are not lost in the crowd. He says, "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." God's plan is personal. We are not just dealing with a large computer that does not care about our interests, needs, emotions and aspirations. God's plan is person to person in a way that shows care and concern. The mother eagle would not care for her eaglet if she let it have its way and just let it sit in the nest. How much more so God, who is far greater and loves us far more.

#### B. His powerful presence

Second, think of His powerful presence on our behalf. God not only cares for us, He has the power to make sure that His personal plans for each one of us can be fully and beautifully carried out. The mother eagle did not throw the eaglet out and make it fend for itself. The mother ministered perfectly to the eaglet's needs in such a way that it guaranteed that the eaglet learned to fly. Since God is the maker of all things, He has an even greater power to ensure that our training is carried out. He will not ask you to do something in which He does not also give you the grace to triumph through it. His grace and power accompany His requests that we step out of the nest.

#### C. His skillful protection

Third, His skillful protection. God not only has the loving personal relationship with us in His plans for us, and the power to enable us to live out those plans, but He also protects us from spiritual destruction..

My teacher at Bible School (T. S. Randall) once quoted Col. F. J. Miles as saying,

She [the mother eagle], diving beneath, catches the eaglet on her broad back, and, bearing it beneath her pinions, carries it to the safety and shelter of the ledge. And so the game goes on until the eaglet learns to fly. Never, never once in the whole world's story has it been placed on record that a little eaglet in learning to fly has been permitted to fall to its destruction by the parent bird. Never!

And we can say with an even greater confidence that God will never allow us to crash to the ground and to die spiritually. Paul said, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Paul in the last verses of Romans 8 guarantees that there is nothing in all of this created universe that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If you are prone to doubt your salvation and you see the bottom falling out of everything, hold on to this truth, that God is there beside you swift as a mother eagle and ready to lift you up in an instant. He wants you to learn that you do not need to fear the heights. You don't need to be emotionally distressed. You can rest with confidence in His promises to you. Don't concentrate on the ground that is rushing up at you at an amazing speed. Focus on the promises of a God who cannot lie and seek to be obedient to his word even if doing so seems like an impossibility. If you step out in faith, He will not let you down. And you know what He is calling you to do. I don't need to spell it out. You have His Spirit to tell you.

Actually, the verse before this in Deuteronomy 32 says much the same. Verse 10 says,

"He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.

We are very protective about getting anything in our eyes because our eyes are so sensitive. For God to say that He treats you as if you were the apple of His eye is astounding. That whole verse speaks of His skillful protection of us.

Now, I should probably close with one caution. Don't step out of a nest when God has not called you to do so. Some open doors lead to elevator shafts. We need to use wisdom. We are not talking about presumption. We are talking about following the clear voice of God as revealed in the infallible Bible. Eaglets have been known to jump out of the nest prematurely when the mother was not there and to be killed from the fall. In the same way, when we jump into things that God has not called us to do, God lets us be hurt by our presumption. We need to listen to His Scriptures.

Verse 10 says that God instructed Israel and verse 12 says that He led Israel. And there is plenty enough in the Bible that God calls us to do that is scary. But it is the scariness of a roller coaster because it is *God* calling us to jump, not just our imagination.

For example, God calls us to tithe in Malachi 3, and in our fear of the financial difficulties we flutter our wings and make half-hearted attempts at giving 2% or 3%. And God says, no,

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... And prove Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts,' if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour our for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

And we see others flying and we long to do so, but the fear of financial heights seems too much for us. If you continue to disobey God's coaxing to tithe, the mother eagle (God) is going to knock your financial security completely out from under you so as to teach you to trust Him financially. It's easier to do so right away. Don't be a slow learner and force God to knock your financial nest out from under your feet. So we are not talking about jumping out of the nest on some mystical calling. We are talking about the roller coaster of the Scripture's calls to obedience. Those do indeed test our faith.

Another example: God calls each one of us to be witnesses of His grace, to confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. When an opportunity opens up to do so and you are afraid to jump out of the nest, take God at His word and discover that the more times you jump off, the greater will be the ease with which you can fly. God will come through for you and help you to witness.

Another example. Let's say that you have stolen something from your company in the past, and you have asked God's forgiveness, but you are sure that if you return the stolen property to the company you will get laid off from work and will no longer be able to support the family. Scripture indicates that you need to return the money with interest and ask for forgiveness. Even if you are sure that the bottom will crash out from under you, go ahead and take God at His word. Walk by faith. And watch God come through for you.

You could multiply hundreds of examples of God's commands which are very hard for us to carry out. We want to do it, and we flutter around the nest making faint hearted attempts at obeying God. But if we do not boldly jump into the air in faithful obedience to the mother eagle coaxing us from the edge of the nest, then God will bring a greater disturbance into our lives to teach us to walk by faith and not by sight. Hopefully we will be quick learners of this providential lesson so that the Lord does not have to repeat it many times. May we trust God to be a perfect teacher - a perfect mother-eagle. Amen.