

Call to Worship: (Psalm 146)

Blessed are those whose help is in the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. ... He is the Maker of the heaven and the earth, the sea and everything in them – he remains faithful forever. ... The Lord reigns forever, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord.

Prayer:

Father, forgive me when I am tempted to put my hope in the things of this world, the political system, the legal system, my wealth, my own strength, my intellect, when I know that these things are fallible. Father, I praise you because you are faithful, never failing, the Lord of all things. I put my trust in you for every step I take.

By the saving grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Song: “Every Step” (City Alight, by I Lewis and J Ferguson)

1. I can sing with my whole heart, I have all I need.  
In Jesus my Saviour, my joy is complete  
Onward to glory, yet here I will wait, I will trust in Christ every step I take.  
*For all of my days I will live for your glory, running with courage and faith.  
The prize of my journey, the joy of salvation, to meet my King face to face.*
  2. I am sure of Your promise to guide me each day,  
Though some may oppose me, I won't be ashamed.  
Whatever I face Lord, it won't be in vain, I will trust in Christ every step I take.
  3. So I'm looking to Jesus, perfecter of faith,  
My heart set on heaven where treasure awaits.  
I'll run with endurance to finish the race, I will trust in Christ every step I take
  4. I will, I will rejoice, whatever comes my way. God You're faithful to save  
I will, I will rejoice. I know that God is with me always. (repeat)
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Prayer of Intercession

Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters and other relatives in my family who are suffering from health issues, setbacks, or family relationship difficulties. And I rejoice with them in their triumphs, in their bonds of love, and in the events which make them smile.

I pray for my brothers and sisters in my church family, for those that struggle with mental health, for those facing financial difficulty, and those enduring ill-health. And I rejoice with them when they see the fruits of love, joy, and peace in their lives.

And I pray with my brothers and sisters in the Persecuted Church as they face the loss of friends, family, homes, jobs, and their churches. And I rejoice with them as they are blessed by God in their persecution.

Hold all these in your hand, Lord. Amen

### Bible Reading:

- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5, 11-12

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. ...

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Song: "The Lord is my Salvation" (Keith and Kristyn Getty)

1. The grace of God has reached for me and pulled me from the raging sea,  
And I am safe on the solid ground. The Lord is my salvation.

*Who is like the Lord our God? Strong to save, faithful in love.  
My debt is paid and the victory won, the Lord is my salvation.*

2. I will not fear when darkness falls, his strength will help me scale these walls.  
I'll see the dawn of the rising sun, the Lord is my salvation.
3. My hope is hidden in the Lord, he fulfills each promise of his word.  
When winter fades, I know spring will come. The Lord is my salvation.
4. Glory be to God the Father, Glory be to God the Son  
Glory be to God the Spirit, the Lord is our salvation.  
Glory be to God the Father, Glory be to God the Son  
Glory be to God the Spirit, the Lord is our salvation.

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### Message: "Wings of Eagles"

I have long loved these words from Isaiah 40:31. "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint."

A few weeks ago when we had some fierce storms, particularly in the Adelaide Hills, I was up in Stirling with my chainsaw and splitter, clearing falling trees and branches. I used to be able to do that job all day, but this time, after a couple of hours I'd have to say I was becoming weary. Having hope in the Lord wasn't changing my ability to sustain that sort of effort. My back was painful and my shoulders sore. Yep! I was weary all right.

But I was working with a teenage lad, and even though the verse before the one above says, "even youths grow tired and weary", he was an energiser

bunny! He was doing all the heavy lifting so I didn't have to bend so much, working fast to keep up with the chainsaw. And though he had never lifted an axe before he was so eager to learn how to split wood, how to stand and where to hit. He is a young Christian lad who, I understand, confidently shares his faith with his peers at school, and plays an active role in his church. He was so enthusiastic, so helpful, and related so easily, that I was encouraged working with him and my strength renewed. How good it is to see the grace of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the future of the Christian faith in these young hands. I was soaring on wings of eagles, not so much my body, which was still hurting, but my spirit which was running without becoming weary, walking, and not becoming faint.

Can you imagine Paul, imprisoned in Rome, hoping to get back to his beloved churches, but aware that he may soon die. His chains may have been weighing heavily on him, his meals were probably far from cordon bleu, maybe his old injuries from whippings and stonings were playing up. His body may have been weary. But his spirit was buoyed by thoughts of his friends scattered around the Mediterranean.

To the Ephesians (1:15) **“Ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you.”**

To the Philippians (1:3-4) **“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.”**

And there were special words for his young protégé, Timothy, calling him his son (1Tim 1:18), and urging him to remain righteous and a good example to others (1Tim 6:11-16). Timothy, despite his youth, was a leader in the church at Ephesus, and Paul encourages him in this leadership with some down-to-earth practical advice like, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young.” (1 Tim 4:12) and “Keep your head in all situations.” (2 Tim 4:5). How much Paul must have loved Timothy and how much his spirit would have soared on wings like eagles when he thought of him and prayed for him.

It's probably fair to say that most of those reading and worshipping with these services are of more mature years, and when that is coupled with aging congregations and a widespread lack of children and young people bringing youthful energy into some of our churches, then it's little wonder that weariness may strike us. There are some things we can do, though, to restore our spirits, to mount up again on eagle's wings.

We can bathe our souls in the word of God which is pack full of reminders that we are people of hope. We know that we have hope in Jesus, that the helmet in the armour of God is our hope in salvation, and we have hope in eternal life, inherited with the new life we received when our sins were forgiven and we became followers of Jesus. We have hope in the church – despite what we fear, and what it may look like in our neck of the woods, nothing will prevail against it. We have hope in our God whose nature and name is justice (“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.” Psalm 89:14), in a world where injustice seems to prevail.

There is no doubt that having young people and children around lifts our spirits as I have recounted above. Jesus, when saying, “Let the children come to me”, reminds us that such children teach us about receiving the kingdom of God. If you don't have them in your congregation, rejoice in those who are coming to a knowledge of Jesus, growing in faith

## Wings of Eagles

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and serving him in other churches, through Scripture Union Beach Missions across South Australia, through the Christian Endeavour Camps held for many years at Mt Barker (I have a photo of my father at the 1938 CE Camp in the Mt Barker Showgrounds – some of you may have attended over the years), and through other church camps, conferences and regional rallies. Seek them out. Find and follow them in newsletters, magazines, and on-line publications. The stories and news of young people's lives being changed lifts our spirits and restores our hope.

And, as we pray with the Persecuted Church, let that lift our hearts. They teach us so much about hope. Their testimony is that they don't regret persecution but rejoice in the hope that it brings, just as it did for Paul when he shared his afflictions.

Philippians 1:13      **Now I want you to know brothers and sisters that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.**

Philippians 1:21      **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**

Colossians 1:24      **Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you .....**

So, seek them out. Find and follow them through the Barnabas Aid, Open Doors, and other magazines. Their stories will fill your life with hope in the gospel and the God we all worship.

Have you ever come away from a church service soaring on wings of eagles? Perhaps it was the preaching through which the Holy Spirit spoke to you. Perhaps it was the songs and hymns and music that lifted your soul. Perhaps it was being with your brothers and sisters in Jesus that gave you a deep joy. If we go to church looking for something that is not to our liking, here is a guarantee – we will be 100% successful! The hymns may be too slow, too fast or too few, the reader may be using the wrong version of the Bible, or the bread cubes for Communion may be too small or too large. But if we go expecting that the Holy Spirit will anoint the service with God's grace, we will be released to enjoy all that God has prepared for us. What a gift our church is to us. It is the Body of Christ, and its purpose is to glorify God and enable us to serve each other.

We can't really expect to be on top of things all the time, to be mounting up on wings of eagles at every moment. We face many things that knock us down, circumstances that bring us sadness and grief, pain and discomfort, things to do that we find difficult. We become weary on our run; we faint as we walk. But we have faith in a God who never wearies of renewing us. Even if we are in the midst of things that tire us, if our hope is in the Lord we will soar. It's a promise! Buckle up! And fly!

Song:      "On Eagle's Wings"      (Reuben Morgan)

1. Here I am waiting, abide in me I pray. Here I am longing for you.  
Hide me in your love, bring me to my knees.  
May I know Jesus, more and more.
2. Come live in me, all my life take over.  
Come breathe in me and I will rise on eagle's wings.

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## Wings of Eagles

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### Benediction

May the God of heaven fill you with hope.

May the Lord Jesus walk with you and carry you when you need.

May the Holy Spirit live in you and may you bear his fruits every day. Amen

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA