

Have you ever seen a baby bird leave the nest and fly for the first time? It's a very big deal, a kind of red-lettered day in birddom when a fledgling takes flight for the first time. Leading up to that day, there is of course a lot of flapping of wings, a great many times of standing poised on the very edge of the nest daring oneself to go ahead and leap off the diving board. It's that instant when you race your bicycle, free of the training wheels into a kind of daring, breathless freedom.

Of course, there is dread just prior to this leap into the void of space for the baby bird. But once it has launched itself into the air, more often than not for the fledgling, the ability to fly is instantaneous. Maybe there are a few short legs of the journey into freedom to begin with, a few connecting flights from the nest to a low hanging branch or a patch of grass. The novice cyclist falls a few times, to be sure, maybe even skins his knees from time to time. But, soon the baby bird finds that the air is his natural element, and he's off soaring into space, rising like the notes of a victorious melody into the glorious sunlight. Because, you see, a bird was made to fly. Soaring into freedom is what he was meant to do. The freedom of the heavens is his natural element.



Depiction of Mt.4:19 and Mk.1:17 from www.livingspark.com

Peter's action in this account from John 21 seems very like flying. He has realized the natural element of man is to be with The Lord. It is what he was always meant to do. Can you imagine what he must have felt like? Can you imagine what Peter must have been thinking when this strangely familiar figure standing on the shore of the lake said to him, "Cast your net on the right side, and you'll catch plenty of fish"? (Jn.21:6) Wasn't it Jesus that had given him exactly this instruction when they had first met, when Jesus standing by the Sea of Galilee watching him fish, when Jesus had told Peter, "Come follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men"? (Mt.4:19; Mk.1:17) Could this possibly be The Lord come back again?

And so Peter, realizing that this was his natural element, this was the place he had been prepared to occupy forever beside the Lord he loved; Peter desperate to make amends for his denial of Jesus the night of his betrayal; Peter took only enough time to throw on his cut-off blue-jeans, toss his car keys and wallet into the bottom of the boat, and dive headlong into the water, leaving behind the nest of this earthly world forever.

This was the moment when Peter recognized his natural element, this was Peter's own time to fly, his moment to soar into freedom and be in the glorious place God had prepared for him. And nothing else mattered.

Can you think for a moment what Saul, the man we come to know as Paul must have thought when his eyes were opened? I have to believe that Paul too was rethinking his own natural element at this moment, in that house on Straight Street in Damascus. It must have taken courage to run whole-heartedly into this new life of the believer, because it went against everything Paul had ever been taught.

Remember what kind of man Paul was. In Philippians we read about Paul's impeccable Jewish pedigree, how he was circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless (see Phil. 3:4-6). In Galatians we find out about Paul's ambition and commitment, how he advanced in Judaism beyond many among people of his same age, for he was far more zealous for the traditions of his ancestors (see Gal.1:14).

And in Acts 22 we read of Paul's exalted position in society, how he was born into a family of pedigree, born into the citizenry of Rome, and we discover that he received a five-star education, being sent to study in the very center of knowledge, in Jerusalem under the instruction of Gamaliel, a Jewish Rabbi of such stature that he is mentioned no less than twice in the Christian New Testament (see Acts 5:34-39; 22:5).

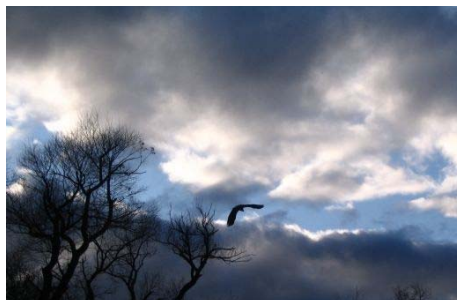
Yet, suddenly all of this was like so much dust. Because, you see, there in that house on Straight Street, Paul's eyes had been opened. The scales had fallen away, and for the first time he could ***really*** see.

The Deceiver wants to rob us of this moment. Satan wants nothing more than to steal away this flight into freedom when we realize what our true element really is. Scripture tells us that our place with God is an amazingly exalted one. In the eighth Psalm and in Hebrews Chapter 2, we are told repeatedly by The Lord that we were made to be "just a little lower than the angels" (see Ps.8:5; Heb.2:7). And Satan does his very best to rob us of that place. The Evil One has spent the last 5,000 years duping mankind into believing we are so much less than the glorious beings God created us to be. The reality of the human condition is not the deception that Satan would have us believe. The real destiny of God's creation called "man" is not the picture this fallen world has painted. Because the truth is that in this life which you and I have been given, we were meant to soar.

And one day, our position will be even more exalted. Because one day, you and I will come to reside in that heavenly throne room described this morning in Revelation Chapter 5. One day, you and I will stand in the presence of the Lamb, proclaiming how worthy is Our Lord "to receive all power, and wealth, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (see Rev.5:11-12).

Dear friends, do not let yourselves be robbed of your freedom. When your moments of flight come at various points of your life, do not be afraid to leap into the void and adopt your place in your natural element. Do not be afraid to be the men and women God has intended you to be. For He has promised, my faithful will walk and not be faint. My children will run and not grow weary. Those who come to believe in me will mount up as on wings of eagles" (see Is.40:31).

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen. jwb+ 4/01/13



Depiction of Is.40:31 by David Isaiah