

## “I Carried You on Eagles’ Wings”

✠ **How hard was that?** (vv.2-6)

✠ **How blessed today!** (vv.7,8)

In the name of Jesus, our blessed Savior, dear closely carried people of God:

*Moses and the Israelites in the desert had to eat. And feeding 2 or 3 million people requires a lot of food. According to the Quartermaster General in the Army,...Moses would need 1500 tons of food each day. To ship that much would take two freight trains, at least a mile long, day after day. For cooking, 4000 tons of wood would be needed and a few more freight trains, each a mile long would have to roll in daily. And remember, they were forty years in transit. Drinking water and washing a few dishes would require a daily deluge of 11,000,000 gallons or a freight train with tank cars 1800 miles long! To cross the Red Sea at night was another challenge. On a narrow path, double file, a line 800 miles long would take 35 days and nights. To cross in one night needed a path through the Red Sea three miles wide in order to walk 5000 abreast. And think of this. Each time they stopped, a campground two-thirds the size of the state of Rhode Island was required, or a total of 750 square miles. Do you think Moses figured all this out before he left Egypt? I think not! You see, Moses believed in God. God took care of these things for him. Now do you think God has any problem taking care of all your needs?* (adapted – email author unknown)

If that’s all you know about the desert crossing, you’ve missed the point entirely. The Holy Spirit says very little about the nearly incomprehensible physical challenges. God has a far more impressive focus for us when He says, **“I Carried You on Eagles’ Wings.”** Stop and think spiritually....

✠ **How hard was that?** (vv.2-6)

Reading the early chapters of Exodus leaves me wondering how anyone could think religious people made this up. The Bible records something very unique in ancient history. When the LORD says, **“Out of all nations you will be my treasured possession,”** it’s an awesome miracle of God’s grace which the ancient Jews could not earn any more we Gentiles could today. Remember how angry the Israelites got at Moses and Aaron? Pharaoh spit on God’s Word and demanded his Israelite slaves keep up their daily quota of bricks but gather their own straw. But after ten plagues that devastated the land and people of Egypt, why did the Israelites still not trust the LORD? When Pharaoh’s army trapped them at the Red Sea, the Israelites demanded, **“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?”** (14:11) Even after Pharaoh and his entire army drowned in those returning waters, **the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”** (15:24) God purified polluted springs and brought them water from the rock. And when they needed breakfast, God provided the “What-is-it?” **manna** all over the desert floor every morning, plus quail for supper every night. And remember in the hymn how “you can be like faithful Aaron holding up the prophet’s hands”? (CW 573:3) That happened when the Amalekites attacked, and Moses found the Israelites kept winning so long as Aaron and Hur held his hands steady until sunset. God gave victory and miracles day by day.

Can you see the point? **How hard was that** for the LORD God to carry them **on Eagles’ Wings**? The physical miracles must have seemed as natural to them as when you open the refrigerator and find fresh milk that came all the way from the grass in a pasture, through cows and pipelines and trucks and bottles to your cereal in the morning. Few of us have raised cattle or chickens. Even less have butchered, but we’ve all enjoyed spicy wings or succulent steaks on the grill. Yet the real miracle is God’s patience with our attitudes. We’re like the little eaglets that the mother eagle bustles out of the nest, but we can’t stop complaining about games we wanted to play or movies we wanted to watch. “Ah, Mom!” the baby eaglets cry, “Do we have to go and fly again?” We like it here in our little nest with the awesome view. How do we know our wings will work? How do we know you’ll swoop down and catch us if we forget

how to fly? Our memories are no longer than *Sesame Street*. Our biggest problem is that we forget God's Word. "***Now if you obey me fully and keep,***" i.e., guard, "***my covenant, then out of all the nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.***" Under the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai, God placed this condition on the people: "***If you really listen and guard my agreement with you, then...you will be mine.***" Forty years of wandering in the desert, followed by the failure of their priests, kings and prophets leading down to the Babylonian Captivity, followed by the ultimate rejection of God's own Son, **How hard was that?** When God said, "**I Carried You on Eagles' Wings**" it was an absolute miracle of God's saving grace.

### ✠ **How blessed today! (vv.7,8)**

What's really scary nowadays is how many assume this ancient history is a myth or has nothing to do with us or gives us a recipe for making ourselves right with God. Millions of church people keep claiming with the ancient Israelites, "***We will do everything the LORD has said.***" That's what all the world's religions think they can do with their manmade versions of God. But the God of the Bible wants us to see the reality of our sinfulness first so that we can fully appreciate **How blessed** we truly are **today!**

So the Ten Commandments in the very next chapter of Exodus are repeated in Deuteronomy 5 and in throughout the New Testament. These are not ten suggestions, but the holy, unchangeable will of God who promises to punish with eternal death in hell everyone who breaks them. God wants us to face the fact that we cannot obey even the First Commandment, much less all the rest. If you have trouble listening to sermons as I do, it's because you have "other gods" instead of the LORD. Anyone or anything that has your heart is really your god. Do you curse and swear and break the Second Commandment? Or do you break it by failing to use God's Name in a good way because you're afraid to mention Jesus with your friends and relatives? If going to church is hard in your heart, you're breaking the Third Commandment. Despising the government or pastors is as sinful in God's sight as disobeying your parents under the Fourth Commandment. In God's view of the Fifth Commandment if you fail to speak up to stop abortion of the unborn or doctors' death of the aged and infirm, you're guilty of murder. Lustful thoughts or failing to love your spouse emotionally and physically defile the Sixth Commandment. And even if you never steal, any failures to help your neighbor with his property or protect his good name instead of gossiping break the Seventh and Eighth. And if somehow good church people could get past 1-8, Commandments Nine and Ten would blister them with disobedience because every last one of us have coveted our neighbors possessions, people and position. This is bad news!

The Good News is that God did not destroy the ancient Jews but saved them to bring forth a Savior for Jews and Gentiles alike. When God sent His Son Jesus to be born under the law, God was providing the One Way for all of us sinners to be redeemed from the curse of God's law. God knew we could no more keep the Old Covenant than the Israelites who swore so confidently at Mount Sinai. God sent Christ with His fresh, invigorating New Covenant of pure grace where God gives us His holiness by faith in Jesus. Jesus obeyed every commandment of God perfectly. Now everyone baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is credited by God with the only righteousness able to reach the promised land. Of all people you know the flipside of being God's "***treasured possession.***" It's being able to pray "***Our Father in heaven....***" We are His and He is ours. What more could we want besides?

The ancient Greeks pictured in the movie *Troy* thought they needed two coins on the eyes of each dead person to pay the boatman across the River Styx to the underworld. Praise God, we don't have to go there! Christ died for all. Just put your faith in Jesus. With His holy, precious blood He paid your fare across the river Jordan to the Promised Land of heaven. He will guide you through this wilderness of sin all the way to that blessed shore. At last we will know **how truly blessed** we are **today** because then we will be able to look back at our entire lives and understand our loving Father's joyful pride in His own great grace and mercy: "**I Carried You on Eagles' Wings**" through all life's trials and tribulations – home at last. Amen.