

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

March 9, 2008

The spirit of factionalism

by David King

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you before hand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

The Greek word translated "heresies" means simply "a choosing," then any grouping of people around a favored choice. Other translations render this word as "factions" (NASV), "parties" (ASV), "divisions" (Beck), "party intrigues" (NEB), and "party-spirit" (Williams, Phillips, Moffat, Goodspeed). The word is often translated "sect" elsewhere in the New Testament, and is used to describe the various sects that divided the Jews, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees (Ac. 5:17; 15:5).

In later years the word came to be used to describe a group that follows false doctrine. Certainly factions can arise when false teaching is being pushed, and those who cling to the truth must stand apart (1 Cor. 11:19). But the clash of truth versus error is not inherent in the word. Rather, it describes the act of taking sides in a dispute, whatever the relative merits of the issue at hand. William Barclay expresses it well: "People who hold different views very often end up disliking, not each others' views, but each other." It is this human tendency to divide up into factions over every little disagreement that is being condemned.

Let us be clear on what Paul is saying here. Some people will lose their souls, not because they committed adultery or murder, or engaged in drunken orgies, but because they nurtured a spirit of factionalism among brethren. Any time brethren begin using "us" and "them" to define an issue among themselves, the spirit of factionalism is creeping into the body. If not checked, open division will be the inevitable result.

The genius of the gospel is not that it eliminates all differences among people, but that it provides a way for people to remain united despite their differences. If Christianity in the first century could bring together Jews and Gentiles, masters and servants, men and women, surely it can help people today overcome whatever personal biases they might have, and unite upon a common platform.

How can the spirit of factionalism be avoided when dealing with disagreements? Paul shows us the way in the verses that follow: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (5:22-23). When brethren are fully committed to practicing these characteristics in their lives, especially in their treatment of one another, factionalism cannot gain a foothold. They may disagree on a wide range of opinions, but their love for each other will not allow those disagreements to crystallize into factions.

The spirit of factionalism is tearing this world apart. God's people can ill afford to add to the chaos.