

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)*

April 27, 2008

Appointed to eternal life

by David King

"Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

The theological system known as Calvinism teaches that God predetermines the fate of every human being before he or she is born. According to this system of thought, there is a plan of salvation that people must respond to in order to be saved, but God chooses individually who will respond to that plan, and who will reject it. In effect, we are merely puppets playing out our roles in a theatrical production on a cosmic scale.

Those who believe this system of theology often point to this account of Paul's work among the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia to uphold their contention that salvation is God's decision, not ours. Clearly, they say, these Gentiles who believed did so because they had already been selected to that privilege long before. Is that what this passage is teaching?

First, it is helpful to note that these believing Gentiles are not the only group mentioned in this account. Back up a couple of verses to a description of the unbelieving Jews. "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles' (v. 46). Paul clearly pinned the blame for their rejection of the gospel on themselves, not God. By their decision, they had rendered themselves unworthy of eternal life. It was not God's doing.

So the text itself seems to point in two different directions: Is our fate pre-ordained by God, or do we determine our own destiny?

Let's take a closer look at our opening text. No doubt these people were pre-dispositioned to accept the gospel even before they heard it, but nowhere does the text say that **God** was the one doing the dispositioning. That so critical a piece of information should be missing is our first clue that the passage is being abused.

Digging a little deeper, the Greek word here translated "appoint" is often used to describe decisions that people make concerning themselves. For example, the household of Stephanas had "devoted" (appointed) themselves to the service of others (1 Cor. 16:15).

With these facts before us, the meaning of the passage becomes clear. Indeed, the Gentiles of Antioch who believed were already disposed to accept the gospel, even before they heard it. But that was not an arbitrary decision of God. These people had long before made their own decision to seek God, to strive for a better life. Though they did not know where or how to find Him, they longed for something better in their lives. So when Paul and Barnabas came with the gospel of their salvation, they gladly accepted it. They had been prepared for it.

Far from supporting the Calvinistic theory of predestination, this account confirms the Biblical concept of free will: People accept or reject the gospel based on a pre-existing frame of mind. It is up to us to choose what frame of mind we are of.