

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)*

May 30, 2010

Anatomy of a division

by David King

"Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus" (Ac. 15:37-39).

Thus ended one of the most productive missionary teams in the history of early Christianity. The two men who epitomized the spirit of the new religion had a falling out over a minor personnel issue, and went their separate ways. They never again worked together as a team.

Which of these two men was right on this issue? Some point to Paul's comment years later that John Mark "is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11) as a tacit admission that he was too harsh in his earlier judgment. But that's a little unfair. Neither man had a crystal ball to know how Mark would perform. All they had to go on was prior experience, and a vague instinct of where that evidence pointed. Given their different temperments and perspectives, Paul and Barnabas came to different conclusions on the matter, and decided that it was best to work separately.

I am interested here in a broader lesson on how groups deal with internal conflict. Notice the wording: "Barnabas was determined . . . Paul insisted . . . so they parted from one another." Replace the two names in this formula with any other pair of names from a group that is experiencing internal dissension, and

you have a perfect description of how division occurs. One party is "determined" on one course of action, another party "insists" on a different course, and if their differences cannot be resolved, they "part from one another." Is there anything left to be said?

Whether the issue under consideration is a matter of "faith" or "opinion" is really irrelevant. Division over matters of opinion are especially inexcusable (thus the tragedy of what happened here). And certainly there are occasions where division is the only avenue left to those who desire to remain loyal to the Lord (1 Jn. 2:19; 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Cor. 11:19; Eph. 5:11). But whatever the merits of the issue, division among God's people is always a matter of two parties having such strong convictions on a point of disagreement that they can no longer work together.

The solution is not to replace conviction with a mushy sentimentality that accepts anything. Neither is it to erect an extra-biblical system of regulations that removes the need for thinking. Rather, our challenge is to instill a love for God and one another that enables us to talk and reason on the issues that trouble us, without letting the poison of carnal attitudes disrupt the harmony of the group.

Barnabas and Paul continued to labor for the Lord in different fields, likely doubling the amount of work they could have accomplished had they stayed together. But most divisions do not produce such a positive outcome. God is glorified when people can work through their disagreements and remain united in peace.