

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 25, 2007

The God of second chances

by David King

"Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; for You are God, gracious and merciful" (Neh. 9:30-31).

These words were spoken by a group of Levites to a gathering of Jews who had returned from Babylonian captivity. The Jews had become sloppy in their faith and conduct in the years following the return, and this sermon was an appeal to the people to confess their sins to God, and commit themselves anew to a life of faithfulness to His commandments.

The theme of this sermon is a review of Israel's history, focusing on two things: God's abundant blessings bestowed upon His people, and the ingratitude of the people in their rejection of His law. Yet for all their rebellion, God did not destroy them. Instead, He "had patience with them." He may have punished them, but He would not consume them totally, "for You are God, gracious and merciful." Clearly, God wanted them to succeed as a nation, and gave them opportunity after opportunity to correct their mistakes and do better.

The whole point of this sermon is that we serve a God of second chances. To be sure, God is holy and pure, not a pushover who winks at sin. But neither is He a cold, heartless taskmaster who ruthlessly punishes every infraction. God wants us to succeed, and will go to extraordinary measures to help us do so.

This aspect of God's character is seen in His dealings with individuals throughout the Bible. Think of Moses, whom God patiently groomed to be Israel's deliverer, despite his lack of confidence in his own abilities. Or look at the judges, like Gideon or Samson, flawed men who nevertheless were used by God to accomplish great things. Think of Simon Peter, whose rash tongue often got him in trouble, including his denial of Jesus — yet even he was given another chance to redeem himself.

God is "not willing that any should perish" — He has already demonstrated that by not wiping out the human race long ago — "but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Make no mistake, He hates sin, and wants it out of our lives. But He knows that we are creatures of flesh, weak and frail, and He is willing to pardon and give us time to learn how to do better. So when we make a mess of our lives, He will not crush us with contempt. Instead, he will give us a second chance, even a third chance, or fourth, or fifth — however long it takes to get it right.

But this patience is predicated on one assumption: that we **want** to do better. The one sin that God has no patience with is outright defiance, the high-handed rebellion that mocks God and dares Him to do something about it. Push Him far enough, and He will push back — hard. But God gets no pleasure from punishing even the impenitent rebel. Instead, He delights in seeing people grow and become better. Only a fool would not take advantage of that patience.