

Pleasant Valley  
Church of Christ

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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)*

October 21, 2007

## A strange thing

by David King

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

Americans are a spoiled lot. We have had so much prosperity for so long that we have come to expect near perfection in every aspect of our lives: perfect health, perfect home, perfect family and friends, perfect customer service, perfect job, perfect retirement, and of course, perfect freedom. If life conspires to deny us any of these inalienable rights, we complain noisily about our plight and demand that somebody (usually the government) fix it.

And these are merely the ordinary frustrations of everyday life. When we get hit with a really devastating blow, we are incapable of dealing with it, and fall apart completely.

In other words, we view suffering of any kind as "a strange thing," an anomaly that simply shouldn't be. Because we view suffering so unrealistically, we're not prepared to deal with it when it comes our way.

Peter reminds us that suffering is not some strange thing, but is the normal way of the world. "Life's not fair," our parents used to tell us, but we've forgotten that lesson somewhere along the way, and must be reminded again that life can be quite unfair. Even the best of people can get sick, lose their jobs, fail at marriage, get hit by a tornado, or be slandered for their convictions. It has always been that way,

and will remain so until the end of time. If we have managed to create a little taste of paradise in our modern technology-rich, democratic society, understand that it is a fluke, a fragile bubble that can be punctured at any time.

Accepting the reality of suffering does not mean that we adopt a pessimistic doom-and-gloom outlook on life. Quite the opposite. Peter urges us to "rejoice . . . be glad with exceeding joy." In fact, the theme of this entire epistle is one of maintaining a joyful spirit in the face of suffering (1:6-9; 2:18-23; 3:13-17). The key is to keep suffering in perspective: Suffering happens, yes, but it is so insignificant compared to the indescribable joy that we will soon experience in heaven. By keeping our eyes focused on the goal before us, the misfortunes we encounter in this life will be seen as mere nuisances that irritate us "for a little while" (1:6). They're just not worth complaining about.

That's why grumbling about our troubles is a sin (1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14). It contributes nothing toward helping the problem, and distracts us from what should be our real objective in life. Complaining about their problems destroyed the Israelites in the wilderness, and it will destroy us, too, if we allow that behavior to dominate our lives.

Of course, heaven is in the future, and our pain is now. We can't deny that suffering hurts. But the pain is easier to bear if we stay focused on the reward that is coming.

Suffering is not a strange thing. What **is** strange is that so many people allow it to distract them from what is really important.