

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)*

August 23, 2009

Heroes or rogues?

by David King

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony" (Heb. 11:1-2).

These verses introduce a chapter that is known as the Old Testament Hall of Fame. One by one, the author recounts the stories of people who accomplished great things for God. These are our heroes, the great men and women of faith whose lives we should emulate.

But take a closer look at the lives of the characters portrayed here, and it's clear that the author has not told the whole story about them. For example, Noah built the ark because he was "moved by godly fear" (v. 7). But Noah was also a drunk (Gen. 9:20-21). Abraham obeyed God in moving his family to Canaan and offering Isaac (v. 8, 17). But Abraham was also a chronic liar (Gen. 12:11-13; 20:2-3). Isaac (v. 20) and Jacob (v. 21) presided over dysfunctional families. Moses (v. 23f) was a hot-head whose rash behavior cost him entrance into the Promised Land. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea by faith (v. 29), but this conveniently ignores the sorry record of complaining and idolatry that followed. The catalogue of shame continues in verse 32: Gideon and Barak (cowards), Samson (womanizer), Jephthah (rash oath-maker), David (adulterer, murderer), and Samuel (lousy father).

We could go on and on with this list, but these examples are enough to raise a disturbing question: Is this really a list of heroes, or a gallery of rogues? Are these the kind of people that I want to teach my children to follow?

In drawing attention to the shortcomings of these Old Testament characters, I am not seeking to disparage their memory or minimize the great deeds they performed. On the contrary, the very fact that God used such frail vessels to accomplish His purpose argues for a greater lesson that we should consider.

We like to emphasize the connection between faith and obedience in this chapter, and that's certainly a valid lesson. But in making that connection, we must also acknowledge that the obedience of these people was, at best, imperfect and inconsistent. For all their good qualities, they had flaws that marred their performance.

And therein lies the great lesson of this chapter. We do not call this the "obedience" chapter; we call it the "faith" chapter. Whatever their failures, the one thing that all these people had in common was a belief that God was good and just and right, even if they weren't. Despite their mistakes, they gave their hearts to God, and tried, however imperfectly, to follow that conviction.

Yes, God wants us to obey Him totally. But He knows He's not going to get that. What He **can** get — and what this chapter inspires — is people whose hearts are devoted to Him, despite their faults. They will stumble and fall, and occasionally show flashes of greatness, but more than anything else, they love God. **That** is the faith that saves.

Does this excuse their sins? Not at all. Rather, it highlights the grace of God, who looks past our mistakes to see the heart.