

Things that Do Not Change in a Changing World

I would like to see the hands of you who remember the following:

- The milk man and home milk deliveries
- 78 RPM records, 45's
- Nickle candy-bars, and dime soda-drinks
- Telephone party-lines
- Chrome bumpers and white-wall tires

It is fairly common these days to pick up various kinds of magazines or newspapers and read articles attempting to predict the things that are going to disappear from society. One article I read recently identified ten things that will disappear over the next 110 years: eyeglasses, wallets, keys, game consoles, postage stamps, batteries, telephone poles, snow tires, Band-Aids, and flat-head screw drivers.

Another article talked about ten things that are going to disappear in our lifetime: snail-mail; checks, newspapers, books, land-line telephones, televisions, Vinyl CD's, how we use our time, and perhaps most troubling, our privacy.

I don't know about you, but when I read or hear of things like that, I have mixed feelings, something between nostalgia and apprehension. Some people, on the other hand get excited by change; they are energized by the thought that "*the times are a changing!*" For most of us, it is kind of scary. We do not like change, at least the kind of changes that are coming at us at breakneck speed! For sure it is impossible to keep up with all of the changes happening today.

I think about all of these things and the impact they are going to have on the Christian faith and life. For example, if books are going to become a thing of the past, how will that affect Bible reading and study? I know some of you are already using a digital Bible, either on your iPad, or smart phone, but how is that going to affect things in the future? One has to wonder how Christianity is going to fare in a world that goes ga-ga over the newest and hottest technology? Will the changing time, the changing culture, the changing world make Christianity obsolete?

We don't have a crystal ball, of course, and no one can predict what might happen. It is possible that the madness and insanity and immorality and violence will get worse. It is possible that these things will dominate events to the point that freedom as we know it will be lost. It is possible that Christianity in America will go the way of Christianity in Europe where just a small minority have any interest or practice of Christianity.

Even so, this morning I would like to talk about some things that I am confident are NOT going to change, even in a changing world. I want to share these things with you because I believe it will calm your fears and strengthen your faith.

First of all, in a world that is constantly changing, we need to keep in mind, God does not change.

- In **Malachi 3:6**, God, speaking through the prophet says, *“For I the LORD do not change... .”*
- In **Hebrews 1:10-12**, we read, *“And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; (11) they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, (12) like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end,”*
- In **Psalm 90:1, 2**, the Psalmist writes: *“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. (2) Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God,”*

Think about what those verses are telling us: *God does not change*. That means, on the one hand He can be counted upon, depended upon. He is faithful, reliable, trustworthy. He is not going to disappear, grow old-fashioned, or grow old and die. The eternal God will never be out of date, out of touch.

On the other hand, the fact that God does not change also means that the God you read about in the Old Testament is the same one you read about in the New Testament. It also means that the God you read about in the New Testament is the same God ruling over the world today. A lot of people have the idea—or maybe it’s just their hope—that the Christian God is some sort of softer, more forgiving God than the one you read about in the Old Testament. They think that while He once had a list of *“thou shalt’s”* and *“thou shalt not’s,”* today He just wants us to know that *“it’s okay,”* and *“no one is perfect,”* and *“if you are sincere, everything is going to be okay.”*

A lot of things have changed over the last fifty years, but one thing that has not changed is God.

Secondly, the Bible says, God’s Son, Jesus Christ, does not change. Of course that stands to reason. If Jesus is God, and God does not change, then Jesus, His Son doesn’t change either. The Hebrew writer also makes that very clear, in **13:8** where we find: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever.”* So what does that mean, that He is the same? Well, one thing it means, at least to me, is that Christ is going to forever remain as mankind’s one and only hope. Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins and He did that once for all time. In Romans 6:10, Paul said, *“For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God.”* Four times in the Hebrew letter (7:27; 9:12, 26; 10:10), the writer there makes the same point, Christ’s sacrifice was a once-and-for-all event.

The fact that Christ does not change tells me that if we hope to be forgiven of our sins; if we hope to avoid the wrath of God for our sins, then our faith and hope have to be placed in him and him alone. There is no other way. In a world that loves to come up with new ways to do just about everything, it might be a bit disconcerting to know that there is but one way, but that

is what Jesus said: "I am THE way, and the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except by me," (John 14:6).

In a world where it sometimes seem like everything is changing, and everything nailed down is coming loose, it is good to know, God and Christ do not change!

It's also good to be reminded that what is associated with God and Christ does not change, and that includes His Word.

- The form or device by which we get God's Word may change as it did from the scroll form to the book form, from the hand-printed to the machine printed. Someday it may just be a chip that produces a read-out on the lens of your eyes, but the word itself is not going to change.
- In **1 Peter 1, beginning in verse 23**, we read: *"For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. (24) For, 'ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, (25) BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.' And this is the word which was preached to you."*

In Matthew 5, 6 and 7, we find what we call the "Sermon on the Mount." It is an extraordinary collection of the teachings of Christ with respect to the kind of life Christianity calls one to live. You can find many studies made of that sermon, and it is well worth your time and effort to study that passage thoroughly, but let me draw your attention to the closing portion of that text, **chapter 7, beginning in verse 24**:

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (25) And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. (26) And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. (27) And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." (28) And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, (29) for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Notice Jesus spoke about wisdom. He said, *"Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man."* By contrast, everyone who doesn't hear his words, or do them, is like a foolish man. He illustrated his point by contrasting two houses, one built on a rock, or solid foundation, the other built on the sand. One stood the test of time, the other didn't.

What is wisdom? Jesus said it is something based on two things: hearing and doing the things that Jesus taught. Stuff you learn in a college or university today might make you smart. It might make you educated, and it might even make you rich, but wisdom requires hearing and doing what Jesus taught.

When I was in school back in the 1950's and 60's, it was said that knowledge doubled every ten years. Ten years ago some experts claimed that knowledge was doubling every 18 months. IBM is predicting that in the next couple of years, information is going to double every 11 hours. Wow! How in the world can anyone keep up with that? Who would want to? However, even if someone could, would that make that person wise? No, Jesus said that true wisdom is based upon two things: Hearing and doing what God's word says. God's word is never going to change, even in a changing world, and that means that what constitutes true wisdom is never going to change. And we know that life has a way of eventually causing men to seek for wisdom. When all of the games have been played, all of the gadgetry has been handled, when all of the stuff has been amassed, when all of the mistakes have been made and all of the relationships broken, and sometimes when our health is gone, what we begin to see is that what we need the most, what we always needed the most was wisdom.

Well, that points us to yet another thing that will not change, even in a changing world, and that is the man's spiritual blindness and sinfulness. Today's technology may give way to something with "more whiz and more bangs" but mankind is never going to be without the need for God's wisdom. God said so, so long ago. *"I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps,"* (Jeremiah 10:23).

Does anyone really believe that any or all of the changes we have seen in the world over the past 50 to 75 years has made the world a better place? Are people more moral? Are they kinder, gentler, and less selfish? Are crime rates going down? Is violence on its way out, or is it getting worse?

The truth is, nothing in the world has changed since the beginning of time with regard to the problem of sin. People today, as much as ever are still living in ignorance and/or defiance of the will of God. The truth of **Romans 3:10-18** has not changed, and we have no reason to think that it ever will.

As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." 13) "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." 14) "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." 15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16) in their paths are ruin and misery, 17) and the way of peace they have not known." 18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

Man's problem with ignorance and sin is never going to change.

And because that's true, that means another thing that is never going to change, even in a changing world, is for man's need for the gospel.

It is possible that someday researchers may find a way to prevent cancer or Alzheimers. If and when that were to happen, there would not be any further need for a cure. Wouldn't that be

wonderful! But the truth is, man's problem with sin, which is like a fatal cancer of the spirit, of the soul, will never be eradicated. It may get worse, as bad as it was in the days before the flood (Genesis 6:5), but the need for the gospel is never going to change.

Mankind is never going to *not* need to hear and believe the gospel. It will never *not* have a need to confess Christ's name. It will never have a need to **NOT** be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. Those things are never going to change. Man's need for the gospel is never going to change, and the gospel that meets his needs is never going to change.

Another thing that does not change, even in a changing world, is the fact that all men have an appointment with death, and the judgment of God. The Bible tells us what we all know to be true. *"It is appointed unto men, once to die, and after that comes the judgment," Hebrews 9:27.* You don't get out of that appointment by living in the U.S., by eating right, or getting the proper amount of exercise or rest. Vitamins are not going to change things, at least significantly. Rich man, poor man, red and yellow, black and white, it doesn't matter; every one of us have an appointment with death.

Modern man likes to think that all of the scientific and medical discoveries over the past hundred years have made it possible for us to live longer and better. Whether we are living better is subject to debate but there is no debate that we really aren't living longer. The fact is, people have been living into their 70's and 80's and even 90's for thousands of years. Modern medicine may keep you from dying of a specific illness, but they can't keep you from dying.

And then, following death, nothing is going to change the fact that every one of us will have to stand before God to give an account of themselves. Paul said every person is going to have to stand before God and given an answer for everything they have done in this body, whether good or bad. A changing world does not change that. A changing world may give us the opportunity to do more things in this body—maybe some good and maybe some bad, but it won't change the fact that one day, our spirits are going to leave our bodies and return to the that God gave it. Nothing can change the fact that that day is coming, and when it comes, you are going to have to stand before God and answer for everything you have done, whether good or bad, every thought, every word. Incidentally, did you know that day was fixed in the mind of God before you were even born (Psalm 139:16)?

All of that then tells us there is something else that is never going to change, even in a changing world, and that is the need for the church in the world. There are a lot of people already who think the church is unnecessary, a thing of the past. Some people are so full of themselves that they actually think they don't have any need for a church. They are confident that they are as good, or maybe even better than most hypocrites who go to church, so they just write off the whole idea of organized religion. Unfortunately they have believed that lie perpetrated by the devil, and may go to their graves without ever becoming a part of Christ's church on earth.

The Bible tells us—**Acts 20:28**—that Christ gave His blood to purchase the church. That church He purchased, he left in the hands of his apostles. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, those apostles went about preaching the gospel and organizing the converts into local congregations in various cities in the ancient world. Those congregations had assemblies, where the Christians came together to worship God together. They worked together in various good works for the glory of God. They encouraged fellow members with their love and helped them when they were in need.

In **1 Timothy 3:15**, Christ's church is described as the pillar and ground (or, foundation) of the truth, which is the gospel. As I said earlier, the gospel, which is God's answer for man's sin problem is never going to change. Man's sin problem is never going to change, and so the need for churches that will faithfully proclaim that gospel is also never going to change. There may be a lot of churches that will change, that will disappear, and if they abandon their role as faithful proclaimers of the gospel, they should disappear. But since man's spiritual blindness and sinfulness is a problem that is not going to change, and since the gospel is the answer to that problem, and since the church is the pillar and ground for the truth of the gospel, then one thing that is not going to change, even in a changing world, is the need for faithful congregations of Christ's church.

Things that do not change, even in a changing world:

- God and Christ do not change.
- God's Word does not change
- Man's spiritual blindness and sinfulness will not change
- The world's need for the gospel is not going to change,
- The appointment of every man with death and the judgment of God has not changed
- The need for the church will not change

At a garage sale, a box full of old eight-track music tapes sells for 50 cents, and no one buys it. Why? No one buys it because no one wants it because a box of old eight-track music taps is almost useless. Isn't it interesting that most people go through life investing in things that are all but useless? We live in a changing world, where today's wonders will be carried out with the tomorrow's trash. That isn't any way to build your life.

Instead, build your life on things that do not change, even in a changing world. Build your life on God, His Son Jesus Christ and His Word. Do that and avail yourself of God's wisdom as you prepare for the certainty of your appointment one day; an appointment with both death and the judgment of God.