

THINGS THAT NEVER CHANGE

by Danny Tunnell

We look at the world today, and things seem to be changing at warp speed. We have things today that our grandparents never dreamed about and we take them for granted. My grandfather was born in 1890, and the likelihood that anyone in his family even saw a car that year was very low. The automobile was still in its infancy. He was 14 years old when the first motor-driven airplane flew and 17 years old when Oklahoma became a state. The Civil War may seem like ancient history, but many of us were alive in 1956 when Albert Henry Woolson died at age 106 as the last surviving veteran of that war. Things have changed and time marches on for all of us.

So many changes have taken place over the years. It may be hard for some to grasp the concept that there are things that have never changed, and never will.

God has not changed. "I am the Lord, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6). The Bible says God is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2). God had no beginning and He has no end. He is eternal. There is no variation or shadow of turning with God (James 1:17).

God is unchanging in His holiness. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8).

God's judgment is unchanging. God is going to judge the world and each one of us will give an account to Him (Romans 14:12). Daniel Webster was asked, "What is the greatest thought that ever crossed your mind?" Mr. Webster thought for a moment and then replied, "The fact of my personal accountability to Almighty God."

God is unchanging in love. God is love (1 John 4:8). He demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

The word of God has not changed and never will. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8). "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89).

Human nature has not changed. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). The human heart is the same everywhere. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). But thank God that His word gives us the right way of thinking.

The Bible is the thoughts of God. He became an author and has shared His very thoughts with us. We are to renew our minds with the word of God (Romans 12:2).

The way to God has not changed. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). His way is a narrow way (Matthew 7:13,14). In every generation the only way to God is through Christ. Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

Jesus will never change. Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus Christ who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood will never change (Revelation 1:5). To receive the benefits of the blood of Jesus which he shed on the cross, we must believe in Him, repent of sins, confess Christ, and be baptized (John 1:12; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:9; Mark 16:16).

These things that never change are the old paths, the good way we are to walk in to find rest for our souls (Jeremiah 6:16).

— Miami, OK

DON'T BITE BACK

By Ron Stough

When my brother and I were growing up, we had a little dog named Tip. Now Tip was a good old dog, but he was pretty irritable. In fact, he was known to snap at those who irritated him. On one occasion, however, he met his match. My brother apparently played too rough with him, and Tip nipped him. My brother's reaction was simple . . . he bit Tip back. Old Tip ran off yelping, with his tail between his legs.

That story illustrates the philosophy of a lot of people toward life. It's the old "eye for an eye" mentality. The world says, "Don't take anything off of anyone." The Bible, however, holds the Christian to a higher standard. We can achieve God's standard if we will:

Remember it is God's prerogative to avenge wrong. He has told us, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Romans 12:19). Retaliation isn't an

option for us; it is something God has reserved exclusively for himself.

Refuse to harbor resentment in our heart. As long as it is there, it will fester and we will never heal. As long as resentment exists, the urge to get even will be difficult to remove.

Realize that we cannot be forgiven unless we will forgive. Jesus taught that principle in his prayer in Matthew 6, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (vs. 14,15).

Rest assured that one day every wrong will be set right (2 Corinthians 5:10). Those who mistreat us will not go unpunished. God deals with them in his own time. Paul describes the only acceptable way to destroy an enemy in Romans 12. We are to treat him with

kindness, thus making our enemy our friend.

— Duncan, OK

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:31,32).

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:12-14).

"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Galatians 5:15).

Old Paths

Vol. 49, No. 11 November 2025

"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

REDEEMING THE TIME

by Wayne Robbins

Comparing our earth time existence to eternity, the Bible reveals it to be very short. King David refers to it as a passing shadow (Psalms 144:4). The apostle Peter compares it to the lifespan of grass that is soon harvested (1Peter 1:24-25). James describes earth life as a vapor that appears for a little while and then passes away (James 4:14). And the psalmist reveals that God has limited mankind's average time on earth to seventy years (Psalm 90:10). All of these examples succinctly reveal that our earth time existence is very brief.

God created us to do things that would please Him and give glory to His name (Isaiah 43:7). In doing these things we are preparing ourselves to meet our God in judgement (Hebrews 9:27). Now the important thing to remember is that we have this brief earth time existence to do this. So every minute is precious. We only have this short window of opportunity.

Now, a question: Are we making the most of our time?

The apostle Paul encourages us with these words, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

"O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather! And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you" (Psalm 39:4-7).

"We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4).

— Arkansas City, KS

TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR

By Joe Slater

OK, I confess, I'm guilty! I am not the world's greatest listener. I suspect that all of us would do well to sharpen our listening skills. Nowhere is that more true than in listening to the word of God. Hearing God's word involves far more than getting your eardrums vibrated! It includes your response to the message.

Jesus said, "Therefore take heed how you hear" (Luke 8:18). Earlier in that chapter He had explained His parable of the sower. The four soils were four kinds of hearers (8:12-15). Sadly, in three of the four cases the hearer didn't respond with faith and obedience.

Take heed how you hear! Why? Look at Luke 8:10 – "Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." When a person doesn't care what God has to say, he doesn't listen, doesn't put much if any effort into understanding, and certainly doesn't submit and obey. One who sincerely desires to know and do God's will, however, will thrive and grow. "For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even that which he has will be taken from him" (Luke 8:18).

This ought to scare the socks off people who find Bible study and the assembly "boring"! Is it possible for teachers and preachers to become monotonous and dull? Yes, it is – and shame on us when we are! But at least equal shame applies to those who turn glassy-eyed the moment someone begins to read or talk about the Book.

Here's another confession: I've been sorely tempted on occasion – usually in the middle of a sermon – to say something totally irrelevant and ridiculous just to see if anyone is listening closely enough to catch it. Fortunately, I'm too chicken to actually do it.

It's bad enough to zone out when a family member is asking you to pass the potatoes. But may God help us never to treat His word with disinterest!

"Take heed how you hear!"

— Springfield, IL

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:19-21).

FIFTY YEARS OF PREACHING

By Dalton Key

Looking back on fifty years of preaching, a few observations come to mind:

A short sermon that makes a needed point is better than a long sermon that goes nowhere slowly. Length is one thing; depth another.

Compared to practice, preaching is simple business.

No one knows everything about anything. It is best to avoid those who think they do.

Preaching that neither convicts nor convinces will never truly convert.

Water can't be drawn from an empty well. Just because you've been asked to say something doesn't guarantee you have something worthwhile to say. Drink deeply from inspired scripture and always know more than you share.

The people sitting in the pew are not there for you, they haven't come to hear about you, and they certainly are not there to worship you; they have come to worship God and to hear from you how the Bible and the Christ can make a difference in their lives.

Some things are worth fighting for; most things aren't. Knowing the difference makes all the difference.

Preaching without prayer is powerless.

The song service can make or break the entire worship service.

Good habits are much easier broken than created; bad habits are the reverse.

The Golden Rule applies to preaching. If you were listening, how would you want to be told? "Speaking the truth in love," should always be the aim.

Know your subject, know your audience, and perhaps, of highest importance, know when to quit.

Paul's inspired charge still rings true: "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching . . . always be sober-minded, endure sufferings, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2,5).

EDITORIAL . . .

VICTORY IS OURS!

By Dalton Key

Even though Paul's life was anything but easy, he never portrayed himself as a victim, but rather as a victor because of Christ living in him.

Following his conversion to Christ, the apostle's life was fraught with countless examples of opposition, affliction and painful persecution. He wrote the Corinthian brethren recounting several examples: ". . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in hunger and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

A lesser man might have complained of his fate and given up the fight. But Paul was made of sterner stuff. While imprisoned in Rome, his words to the Philippians ring forth with amazing faith and faith-based optimism. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus . . . Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!" (Philippians 1:21; 3:13,14; 4:4). The zenith of the apostle's positivity is revealed in the powerful words of Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

This powerful perspective runs counter to the message put forth by today's modern, conventional wisdom. Paul's attitude appears unthinkable naive to the insulated intellectuals dominating our airwaves presently. Did Paul not realize - could he not own - his victimhood? Was he unaware of just how unjustly he was being treated? We can imagine today's talk show hosts sobbing over Paul's pitiable story while insisting he "open up" and "vent his rage."

Paul's view of things may have been unusual and may still be out of the ordinary, but his mind-set squarely agrees with heaven's will. "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

We would all be wise to follow Paul's example.



A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE PUBLIC INVITATION

by Milton Smith

Anyone who attends a few worship services in the church of Christ will quickly notice that an "invitation" is almost always extended by the preacher at the end of his sermon. Some might be curious as to why we practice this. We must admit that there is no direct command in the Scriptures telling us that a public invitation was a normal part of the worship of the early church, and there is no historical evidence that would lead me to doubt this fact. I have had numerous members tell me that they have attended services in the past that did not include such an invitation. I have even had some suggest that this practice could lead to a person ignoring the urgency of responding to the gospel during the week so that he might follow "protocol" and come forward Sunday morning. What if such a person's life ended before Sunday?

Often, as I have extended the invitation, I have stated from the pulpit that a person can "respond" anytime he/she wishes to do so. I hasten to add that to eliminate such a public call to respond would certainly not be a sinful act; we cannot even say that such would be inappropriate because we have no scriptural reason to make such an accusation.

So why do we practice this public call to respond?

I have always viewed the invitation as simply taking advantage of the opportunity!

A person might attend the worship service on a particular Sunday (or Wednesday evening), with no intention of getting his life right with God; but something might be said during the service that might cause this person to seriously reflect upon his spiritual

condition. In this case, a public call to respond might be the final encouragement that this soul needs to get his life right with his Savior. I have known of such cases in which a person is touched by something said and comes forward that very day.

The key word here is "opportunity." Because there is nothing unscriptural about a public invitation, to offer such a call to respond can (and often does) prove expedient. Again, one can respond any time, but what better time to do so than "today," and this certainly includes those times when the church assembles together publicly.

"Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation . . ." (2 Corinthians 6:2).

— Tulsa, OK

MAY THE CHURCH USE A PIANO IN WORSHIP?

By Bobby Key

A preacher of some renown was asked, "May a church use a piano in its worship service and be pleasing to the Lord?" He replied, "I do not know; it would depend on the feeling of the majority of the members and the decision of the elders."

This answer is completely out of harmony with the doctrine of the New Covenant. Enoch had this testimony that he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). This man walked with God, and he did so by faith. In order for one to please God today, he must walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Thus, to please God, one must walk in faithful obedience to the word of God.

The word of God teaches Christians to sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Quoting from the 22nd Psalm, the author of Hebrews says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee" (Hebrews 2:12).

I know of no act of worship acceptable to God unless the Bible authorizes that act to be done. Christians are told to sing. I know of no passage of Scripture in the New Testament that talks about mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship. Therefore, I can have no faith on this subject. " whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

Since when did God allow the majority in a congregation to determine the kind of worship that pleases Him? When did He ever give elders the authority to legislate concerning the type of music to be used in New Testament worship?

The only way we can know what pleases God in the New Testament age is by reading what God has revealed in the New Testament. It is never wise to speak where God has not spoken. - (1929-2018)

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing

with grace in your hearts to the Lord And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:16,17).

Old Paths

830 W. Fargo Drive,
Broken Arrow, OK. 74012

On a nonprofit basis.
Published monthly and
supported by Churches of Christ
and individuals.

Dalton Key Editor
"Subscription Free;
Prayers Requested;
Contributions Appreciated."