

J. N. June 28, 1970 A.M. -

THE CHANGING TIMES

2 Tim. 4:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

No fact of life is more inevitable than that of change. It may be fast or slow - mild or complete. But it occurs everyday that we live.

Growth is change.

Learning is change.

Meeting new friends is a change. When new people come into the Sunday School or the church, or the organization to which you belong, a change takes place.

Every person here can be a prophet. He can predict that tomorrow can be different than today. And he will be exactly right. No two days in history are identical.

It is hard to understand the nature of man which basically resists change. Sometimes he even resents change.

Why does he find it so hard to change. He is a creature of habit, of routine,

If you do not believe this is true, then notice if somebody goes in and completely re-arranges the furniture in a room. And then note the facial expressions of the people as they return.

I remember an old man that told me his wife was always shifting the furniture. She re-arranged the bedroom one day and that night about midnight the telephone rang. He got out of bed to answer the phone. But he never could

find it. Because she had the bed catty-corner across the room and he was pinned in the corner.

Now the first thing change is difficult.

Let me illustrate this with the church in Tennessee that was built out of logs many years ago. The following Sunday a Deacon took the liberty to bore a hole in the log and set a peg in it on which the Pastor's hat could be hung while he preached. Some of the members were so hostile over this unauthorized change, that the church split. And there were two distinct groups - they were known as the pegs and the anti-pegs. It was simply because they could not adjust to this slight change without a feeling that they were being manipulated.

There was another church that rejected a wealthy man's offer to contribute an air conditioning system to the church without any financial obligation. He wanted to do this but the church rejected it by an official vote. The reason was that they felt that air conditioning systems were to be used exclusively in night clubs, theatres, dance halls - and that they had no place in the house of the living God. They were so opposed to a new idea that they vetoed all of it free of charge. It was too different. So it must be wrong.

History tells us that the Mennonite Church had a violent split over the change from the traditional hooks and eyes on their clothes to the newly invented buttons made of pearl. Being conservative some of the older members felt that the gloss of the pearl was displayed and was wrong. And the church split into two groups over hooks and eyes and buttons. Which was correct.

We sometimes wonder what kind of explosion would have taken place if about

time someone had invented the zipper.

Dr. James Sullivan told once about a church where he pastored and they had a brides' class AND it had had that name for 30 years. Most of the members in the class had grandchildren. But they could not even bring themselves to change the name of the old class, which was so dear to them, to they kept the name which was inadequate.

What I am saying to you is that change is difficult. We as humans resent it or resist it.

But change is going to come regardless of our attitude toward it.

They tell us that many a man in horse and buggy days vowed that he would never ride in one of those new fangled automobiles. Until some of them reached the place where his old horse would take to the ditch every time he met one. Then it would not be long before he would be sporting a new car. And he was more surprised at himself than anyone else at his change.

Yet the circumstances of the world could not be ignored.

Second, change can be transitional. Now we prefer that change be gradual and be planned - and that it even be scheduled and developed. Now unless changes do come in this way, they will come by revolution.

The thing that makes change so difficult in a church is that the church is affected by all the changes in the community, in which it is located. These changes put pressure upon the congregation to alter its course to change and

to adjust to a different way. Air conditioned homes lead to the requirement of air conditioned churches. Brick homes led to a cry for brick church buildings. Comfortable chairs in the home made home-made benches out of date in the church. Pianos bought by the home meant that the old reed pump organ was out of place in the church. The electronic age - brought microphones and other aids into the church.

What preacher today could get out and speak for an hour to 3 or 5 thousand people without some electronic device. As Charles Spurgeon or John the Baptist did.

In the third place - there are some things that are not to be changed. In the changing scene of the church which is affected by the changes in patterns of living of the people. There are elements which do not change, must not change, and cannot change.

Jim Ward - Thought life, like a tornado & I pick out what I wanted - discovered, one way, Jesus Christ!

Now this is what makes change in the church more delicate. It must have the mixtures of the changeless and the changing. As our text says before God and the Lord Jesus Christ - be instant, reproof, rebuke and exhort. A church and a minister needs to keep the great goal. Now more than ever, Paul was conscious of this. And of course the people were seeking change in V. 3 Trying to get people to prophesy right things - smoother things - deceiving things.

Young Man, Calif. is not it something, the image of God has changed! No, he has not changed, Jesus still the image of God.

The basic truths of the Gospel do not change. Jesus is eternal, in His nature and saving power. The promises of God are eternal. All men are sinners. Until they have been transformed by the blood of the lamb. The Bible is the Word of God. And the Bible will not change in the way that other things change. We must gear ourselves to our times but we must not allow the anchor to slip

Change in the next place (can be planned.) The best way for change to come about is for it to be planned prayerfully and carefully.

The advertising folks know they can (develop the styles) from one extreme to the other - they can exaggerate and give contrast.

Research has shown the type of people who are always advocating change. The type of persons who will accept change. The types of people who will bring about change. And the type of people who will be the main forces in instituting change. And the type of people who not only resist change - but who will fight against it. Even though the rest of the world has already changed. Now each of these groups is identifiable. Their characteristics are known and researchers have developed ways by which men can be altered and led through a planned pattern. No wonder men feel that they are being manipulated.

Why changes in churches and denominations much come with time, also the process must be different. All the planning in the world cannot change a sinner into a saint. Without the power of God,

You never can build a church without the leadership of the Spirit. Without the major things that are unchangeable, you can never change properly.

When timely changes are desired in the church or a home - you must determine what adjustments are needed. And prayerfully develop these.

Everyone must be involved in the process of change. In planning the process of changes in a denomination or in a church there must be evaluations.

It is difficult for one person to plan in detail for someone else.

This is the basic reason why everyone needs to share. With mutual prayers - relying upon the Holy Spirit.

There must also be love and respect for persons and with their approval. There are so many complex things in the process of changing. The viewpoints, the discussions, the terminology, the methods, the new approaches.

For example, if we set out to bake a cake and I bring the sugar, some body else brings the flour, and some body else brings the flavoring and we mix all these ingredients together and we make a cake. But no one person can say that this cake his his. It is a wonderful cake - and it has a wonderful taste. But no one man can identify his flour or his sugar. It has become a unit.

This is the way of change. When dissatisfaction, and we are unable to identify our personal contributions. And there may come feelings. But these ideas may be disregarded. But every suggestions incorporated into the over-all package helps to make planning less difficult.

That's why it is important for church members to take part in the life of the church. To be in the organizations, to be in the worship services, to give themselves and to assist the church as she moves in this world.

The church member can help shape the change or be shaped by it. Now this is one of the most difficult things about change, and that's why some people want instant revolution in the church. While there should be a gradual step by step change of improving the situation - updating the methods and the effectiveness.

Churches are like the airlines. The old DC-6 with pistons and propeller motors. And they wanted to transfer to jet - so they designed the DC-3 to the DC-6 to the 701 or 747. And they started off with the turbo-prop which was equipped with a jet motor. But it still had the propeller. Now what the people discovered was - was that the public was ready and was anxious for the pure jet before the airlines were prepared to give them that kind of service. In facing this real need and real desire, they went to work on it. In the church - the members should also have this feeling, and pray and work.

Changes are upon us. These are changing times. No longer do we live in the horse and buggy days. No longer can we hold back time. So prayer is needed.

We know that much of the change that has been taking place has not been in the proper direction.

In 1955 the Gallop Poll showed there were 48% of all adults attended church, in a typical week. That is 48% of the adults made their way to the house of worship.

In 1969 it showed that 42% of adults attended church in a typical week. And this is a low point record. When the first surveys were made and conducted, we also discover that in 1957 14% said that they felt that religion as a whole was losing its influence in the American way of life.

In 1970, 75% say that religion is losing its influence on the American way of life.

One of the things about this survey by Gallop is this - young adults are slightly more likely to say that religion is losing influence than our older

Elton Trueblood - No one really knows much about youth work. Each generation is different. You think you have them figured & the next crop comes along & you have to start all over again. They are dynamic, changing, interesting.

persons.

Now we must always believe that the church is in the process of renewal. It is in the process of change and in the process of renewal.

Some of these basic things are (unchangeable.)

Eric Walker, president of Penn State, spoke to the graduates of that school and his address was entered into the congressional records. And he was speaking about the generations and the changes taking place between parents, grandparents, and 2 generations. As he spoke to the young people, he said, "these, your parents and grandparents are the people who within five decades 1919-1969 have by their work increased your life expectancy by approximately 50% who while cutting the working day by 1/3 have more than doubled per capita output!"

These are the people who have given you a healthier world than they found. And because of this, you no longer have to fear epidemics of flu, small pox, diphtheria, scarlet fever, that they knew in their youth. And the dreaded polio is no longer a medical problem. While T. B. is almost unheard of.

Let me remind you, he goes on to say that these remarkable people lived through history's greatest depression. Many of these people know what it is to be poor, hungry, and cold. And because of this, they were determined that it would not happen to you. You would have a better life. You would have food to eat, milk to drink, vitamins to nourish you, a warm

home, better schools, and greater opportunities to success than they had.

Because they gave you the best - you are the tallest, healthiest, brightest generation to inhabit the land and because they were materialistic - you work fewer hours, learn more, and have more leisure time, travel to more distant places and have more of a chance to follow your life's ambition.

These same people, your parents and grandparents, fought man's greatest war - they defeated Hitler. They had great compassion and spent billions of dollars to help their former enemies rebuild their home lands.

It was representatives of these generations that dealt with racial discrimination, built thousands of high schools, trained and hired tens of thousands of better teachers, and made higher education available to millions of youngsters. Where once it was only the dream of a wealthy few.

They have dealt with the pollution problem, they have tried to carry on conservation and setting aside land for you and your children to enjoy. They have paid taxes.

While they have done all of these things, they have had some failures. They have not yet found out an alternative for war, race hatred, and perhaps, you - the members of this graduating class will perfect the social mechanism which all men may follow their ambitions without threat of force. So that the earth will no longer need police, to enforce the laws or for armies to prevent some men from trespassing against others. But those generations made more progress by the sweat of their brow, than any other previous era and don't you forget it. And if your generation can make as much progress - in as many areas, as these two generations have, you should be able to solve a

good many of the world's remaining ills.

The president of Penn State certainly offers something to think about in a world of change. Many of the changes in your generation and mine have brought great strides.

No wonder people re-act today. When some are saying that God is dead and the Devil is a myth. And there are those who would turn the house of God into a political form or a hoot-enany hall.

There are still things that need to change. We think about the liquor. Alcoholic threat. And we need to come to react against these things that would destroy. As did Paul as he was writing to his young friend. Asking him in the midst of change to carry out the full commission that God gave you.

I sometimes think that congregations ought to review occasionally what they are demanding of their pastors. Just what is the task of the man of God., in this changing world.

Verse 2 - He give Timothy a final charge. That we all live and serve in the sight of God - our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, preach the word. There is to be no substitute for the honest man., who will make known with all of his resources the message of redemption.

Second, be instant. Perhaps urgent would be more accurate. Men don't have forever to make up their minds. Every day spent in unbelief for disobedience is lost.

Reprove - again this means to convince. Men have to see themselves. And to look into the mirror of God's word in this changing hour.

Fourth - rebuke. Sometimes it has to be done. Because not that the preacher enjoys it - but because it is for man's good.

Exhort - the pleading note must never be wanting. Men are not driven into the fold. They are drawn - they have a desire, they have a will.

V. 3 - Paul could foresee in his vision that a time would come when men would not want to listen. They would not want to understand that this important things should be done quickly. Men are prone to believe what they want to believe and they will follow teachers who ease up on ethical demands.

Itching ears can always be satisfied.

Furthermore, men like novelty. Very easily lead and deceived. Hence, they forget their known duty to God and to man.

I have a question for you. Are you making religion a matter of convenience today. Have you watered down the demands of discipleship and church membership - that it means little or nothing to you.

In these changing times, it is safe to say, one half of the members of the churches are positive hinderances. They have made religion a matter of convenience.

Now you talk to some people on what it means to be a Christian and what the Bible teaches about the great doctrine of the church - and what the church

is doing to carry out the great commission in this changing time. And most Christians will frankly tell you that they are not interested. They are not interested in discipleship. But Jesus stressed the demands of the Christian faith. Luke 14:25-33.

Paul was not despondent in his thinking. He had a glorious fight. Persecuted. Things were changing. But Paul was a great optimist. I think Jesus was by far the greatest when he said, be of good cheer - I have overcome the world. John 16:33.

This day and age in which we live, is certainly filled with pessimism - the season of despair is all about us. Every day, every month, every year.

Have you ever seen so much discouragement.

*This week - "Will you close The Evening Service?" Large Brech - Pastor subverted men
Dr's Degré Louisville Seminary - Attendance so poor Demoralizing - Service read's your, silent majority: Vote on -*

We have it even in church. We are losing a lot of good men from the ministry of the Gospel because they have been defeated by the giant despair. Pessimism is deadly.

The final chapter of the book is not one of defeat but of victory.

Rev. 11:15. The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord. And he shall reign forever and ever.

During changing times, the man who walks with Christ has every reason to be optimistic for Paul said I can do all things through him that strengthenth me. In that 5th verse, Paul says you must keep your head cool, suffer hardships and do your work as a herald of the good news.

In that 7th verse - I have fought a good fight--I have run my race. I have

of those who have loved him.

Final note on The Changing Times -

A Farmer put up a weather vane with "God is love" inscribed upon the pointer - a friend, noticed it changed direction with the wind - He remarked, God's love does not change, like the wind.

Farmer - you are right. Which ever way the wind blows, God is love.