

CHANGES: TWO KINDS, TWO CONSEQUENCES

Life is full of changes. Our world is changing. Churches also change. Change is not a new phenomenon. Every generation from the beginning has had to deal with changes and make changes. It is important to understand that there are two distinctly different kinds of changes churches can make: changes that are beneficial and helpful to the spiritual health and prosperity of the Cause of Christ and changes that are harmful and destructive.

I. Identifiable Characteristics of Helpful Changes:

- Those who propose them respect the authority of God's word to regulate the faith, worship and practices of the church (Matt. 7:21).
- The changes proposed will always be within the boundaries set by Christ the founder and head of the church (Eph.1:22).
- The changes are not frivolous or made for theatrical purposes.
- The motive for the change made is not to be like the world and those religious bodies who exist and operate without heaven's approval.
- The changes will help the church and her members do a better job of serving Christ and building up his kingdom.
- They will draw disciples closer to Christ and promote godliness (I Cor. 14:26).
- They will not be divisive and destructive in the life of the congregation, but will promote harmony among brethren.
- They will not be made to pacify a restless, worldly element in the church.

II. Characteristics of the Harmful Changes:

- They are promoted without respect or regard for Biblical standards (Matt. 28:20).
- They are often responses to the clamor of young, immature, or worldly members of the church who do not have a good knowledge of the way of truth.
- They are often implemented even though many devout souls are offended by them.
- They are kept even when they foment strife and division among the brethren.
- They are attempted because some successful denominational preacher or church has utilized them.
- They are sought in order to make the church more like her denominational neighbors and thus less likely to be scorned by the world (I Sam. 8:4-5).
- They affect the essential nature and identity of the church of Christ.
- They are often trivial and theatrical in nature.
- Rather than edify, they entertain or pacify restless untaught brethren.
- While they do entertain, they do not actually promote righteousness, godliness and devotion.
- They are implemented for the express purpose of trying to distant the church from those brethren who are determined to abide by the principles sets forth in Scripture.
- They cheapen and devalue the worship of God and the church of the Lord.
- Because they are unscriptural innovations, they cause strife and division in the church.
- It is clear to those who love the church that the choices and changes available to us are only those of the first category. Experience demonstrates that we can flourish and prosper in this wicked world and abide by the principles of the first group, while we flounder and suffer great loss when we follow the latter. Remember the words of the Lord, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."