



"Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear."
—J.R.R. Tolkien

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Change and Constancy

How often do we wish that, when life's events are producing pleasure, satisfaction, and a sense that all is well in the world—at least in our world—things would remain that way forever? On the other hand, when things are not going well, do we not fervently desire that this time of despair would pass, and [joy](#) would once again dawn in our lives?

We have probably all noticed that things *always* change. We live in a world of constant change. [God](#) has set change within His creation to operate as part of the natural order. How long will it be before the next change of weather? Every day we deal with change in our bodies: Our hair continues to grow or fall out, and we go from hungry to full and back to hungry again. We become aware of subtle changes in our weight, energy levels, and moods as time and events affect us. Even our automobiles do not operate without wear and tear: The tires lose rubber, the battery loses its charge, and mechanical parts wear out.

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that energy (along with mass) is conserved. Its form can be changed, but energy can neither be created nor lost. For example, some of the energy of sunlight captured long ago by plants is now available to us as chemical energy in the form of gasoline. When we

burn it in our cars, some of that energy is converted—changed—to mechanical energy making the car move, and some of it becomes thermal energy (heat). A careful accounting for all the energy finds that none is created or lost, only changed to be used again. All other principles used in science and engineering must comply with this law, which is influencing us constantly.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics limits what can be done as energy is applied or transformed. In practical terms, it states that things tend to deteriorate—that is, go from order to disorder—if things are left alone. In other words, God has built natural decay into creation, and unless things are maintained, they will decay into generally useless forms. Thus, a human body will quit working unless it is periodically resupplied with food energy. If an unsupervised two-year-old is placed in a room for a few hours, his mother will find plenty of disorder when she returns! She may be unhappy about those changes, but it only proves that this law of constant change is always impinging on life.

By themselves, these two laws reveal that God forces change on us so that we are required to deal with it. Even though everything in the Garden of Eden was new and created especially for mankind, Adam was told to dress and keep his new environment. *Dress* has the general sense of "embellish" or "adorn," and *keep* means "to guard and preserve or maintain." Thus, he was told to change things, as well as to deal with the decay that would inevitably force changes as a natural result of existence. Change is produced by work, and change also produces work. Change, whether we consider it good or bad, produces stress, and we tend to blame stress for the discouragement or even depression that follows in the wake of change.

Changes are forced on us by fluctuations of the economy. During my 76 years, I have gone through a depression and a number of wars that tend to inflate an economy while the war is being fought. I have gone through at least a half-dozen recessions, been unemployed with no income whatever because of strikes in the steel industry, and collected a great deal of overtime pay when the economy was joy-riding during a high.

My experience is not unusual. It shows a practical reason why God says, "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children" ([Proverbs 13:22](#)).

It is why God urges us to observe the ant, which "provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest" ([Proverbs 6:8](#)). God is admonishing us to take advantage of the good times because they will not last. A change toward the bad will come as surely as the sun rises in the east.

God instructs in Ecclesiastes 1 that change is a constant, and in [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8](#), He reemphasizes the inevitability of change in the well-known passage that begins, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven." He is the Author of positive change, which play major roles in bringing His spiritual creation to the conclusion He desires.

How well did we deal with the changes forced on us by the breakup of the [Worldwide Church of God](#) (WCG)? It involved an element of destruction as many changes do, yet its destruction was positive. It was not the work of [Satan](#) or men, though they were certainly used by God. Instead, it was the work of our Creator, who forced us to deal with it, to make choices as circumstances changed from corporate unity to the church's scattered situation today.

Did everything go smoothly for Israel in the wilderness? When the Israelites found themselves free of their Egyptian overseers, they had trouble adjusting to the change, as it demanded that they be much more individually responsible for their choices. Most of them failed miserably!

[Deuteronomy 8:2-3](#) says that at times God deliberately tests us by producing changes that are uncomfortable and inconveniencing, like allowing us to go hungry. He may even permit painful persecutions to fall on us, just as He did to His only begotten Son. One reason for the WCG's destruction was to break us from our comfort zone, which could have lured us into a second-death trap if we had permitted ourselves to be comfortably misled, falsely assured of our salvation because we were in the [true church](#). The church is not our savior; [Jesus Christ](#) is! How solid is our relationship with Him? Good times have a subtle way of lulling us into complacency. Sometimes we need a change to test whether we are in the [faith](#).

[Repentance](#) indicates the beginning of a positive spiritual and moral change. God demands it of us if His creative powers are to be utilized in us. Then, even as He accepts us into His presence through Jesus Christ, He demands

that we continue what has begun by producing more changes. Just as surely as in the natural world, these positive spiritual and moral changes must continue and be maintained, or we will slide backward to what we were before. He warns us that, if we look back in a yearning manner for [the world](#) and the way we were before the positive changes began, we are not fit for the [Kingdom of God](#)! We must spiritually dress and keep.

We must never forget that, regardless of what we are asked to go through, it does not mean that God has ceased loving us. He does not change in any way in His [love](#) for us. Paul makes this point in [Romans 8:35-39](#):

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are [more than conquerors](#) through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" ([Hebrews 13:8](#)). He is outside the process of change that all natural things are. His love, character, and leadership are constants in a world in which nothing stays the same for very long. [Hebrews 1:10-12](#) says of Him:

You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.

As High Priest, it is His work to develop us until we are in His image, having the same kind of love and character that endures unchanging throughout eternity.

- John W. Ritenbaugh

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