



"God often comforts us, not by changing the circumstances of our lives, but by changing our attitude toward them."

—S.H.B. Masterman

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Dealing With Change (Part One)

When we were baptized and gave our lives by covenant to [God](#), we committed ourselves to a lifetime of change. This change would be partly internal as we yielded to God as He created us in Christ's image, but external changes would also occur. Under Christ, our lives are not our own, and we should expect our world to change and even occasionally turn upside down.

Not a single one of the heroes of [faith](#) mentioned in Hebrews 11 lived a settled or comfortable life. They experienced continual change to their circumstances, yet they soldiered on and emerged victorious on the other side. Noah witnessed the end of one world—one age—and the beginning of another. How is that for a change? Abraham and Sarah were pilgrims. They were very wealthy, but they were continually on the move, living in tents. Joseph experienced a series of improbable events that were entirely out of his control. [Moses](#) went from heir to the throne of Egypt to a wandering shepherd of sheep—then to a leader of millions of unbelieving, complaining Israelites. Most of us would shudder if that were our job description!

The lives of the prophets were predictable only in the sense that they could expect persecution and probably martyrdom. How much unrest was present in the lives of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, or Samuel? Hebrews 11 is an honor roll for us, and while it sounds noble and triumphant, it should also make us ponder: What sort of tumultuous and unsettled lives did the people *really* lead who subdued hostile kingdoms; worked righteousness; obtained divine promises; stopped the mouths of real, live lions; quenched the violence of destructive fire; escaped the edge of the sword meant to murder them; became valiant in battle; witnessed [resurrections](#); and were tortured, mocked, scourged, and imprisoned? How much stability and security did those people have who wandered about in goatskins, being destitute, [afflicted](#), and tormented, making their way through deserts and mountains, living in dens and caves of the earth? Truly, our lives are soft by comparison.

People commonly say, "The only constant is change." The events and external changes that we face may be vastly different in detail from what we read in Hebrews 11, but they are no less real. We face the same spiritual enemies and strain against the same carnality. Yet, the same mechanism—the same means—that brought those heroes to completion is also available to us.

In general, we know that the means is faith because that is what the chapter is about. One of Jesus' [parables](#), though, magnifies one specific, crucial aspect of faith that can help us to weather the changes of life:

But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings *and does them*, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard *and did nothing* is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great. ([Luke 6:46-49](#) ; emphasis ours)

The flood He speaks of can represent all those circumstances and events that the heroes of faith experienced. Consider the significant events in our own lives, the abrupt and perhaps traumatic changes that crashed upon us or may be pressing against us even now. This flood depicts the pressures of life that threaten to overwhelm us and cause us ruin. The specifics are different for each of us, but all of us are facing, or have had to face, or will face, such a flood.

The symbolism in this parable is simple. Many scriptures establish the rock as being a symbol of [Jesus Christ](#). By using the symbol of a rock, Jesus is highlighting stability and endurance, something that lasts forever, as we will continue to see. The rock will withstand the ravages of time and the violence of the flood. It is immovable and unshakable despite what is thrown at it. Regardless of the fray, this rock does not budge. It is a reliable foundation, one that is solid and sure. It never changes; it remains constant and dependable. We can take refuge on it because it can withstand the evil of the day when we are not able.

Even though we know that the rock represents our High Priest and Elder Brother, the One who has gone before us ([Hebrews 2:10](#)), notice that this parable is not exclusively talking about Him. This is a common oversight. Look at verses 46 and 47 again, because they define what Jesus is actually teaching. He does *not* say, "Whoever comes to Me, and calls me 'Lord,' is like the wise man who built his house on the rock. . . ." While that is how it is often interpreted, it disregards the whole point of the parable.

Verse 46 begins with a rhetorical question: "Why do you call Me your Master and Sovereign but then ignore what I tell you to do?" It is not enough to call Jesus our Lord. He is, obviously, that and more, but if we do not then follow through and actually *do* what He says, then we are exactly like the man who built without a foundation and secured only calamity.

Jesus says essentially the same thing in verse 47. It is not enough merely to come to Him. It is not enough just to hear His sayings. Only those who hear *and do* His sayings have access to the unshakable foundation. But it is not just given to them; they have to work for it. This parable is about acting on belief—acting on faith—in what God has said in order to ensure our foundation. If we do not *do*, we are vulnerable to being swept away by the flood.

In Part Two, we will explore how acting on faith helps us to face the changes in our lives.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Change and Hope](#)

by John O. Reid (1930-2016)

As God found it necessary to test our forebears, Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, David, Samuel, Paul, and Jesus Christ, He has allowed us to go through these grueling experiences (trials, tests, and temptations) for maximum growth. We need to develop an intense love for the truth, bonding with one another, preparing for the tasks God has designated for His elect. Our entire lifetime will be engaged in overcoming sin and our human nature in order that we may attain the hidden manna (special wisdom) and the white stone (a symbol of acquittal).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Are We Ready for Change?](#)

by Bill Onisick

The apostle Paul describes the Christian life as a process of change: from the old man to the new man. Human beings, though, typically resist change because it is difficult. Bill Onisick provides advice on how we can make the process of change more organized and perhaps a bit easier too.

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