

The Nature of Change

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In the last year we have seen many changes in our congregation. We have seen the departure of an elder and a deacon, teachers and members of the church. We lost a few people to the world, and lost two members to death (yet she gained her victory). We also gained some members, a teacher and an elder. In congregations around us there were a number of changes; some lost their elderships and preachers, others saw changes in their meeting places and membership too. Indeed, all around us there were changes in society. In the end, was all of this change a good thing or a bad thing?

In Acts 8:1-4 we read about some dramatic changes to the church of Christ in Jerusalem. These changes arose when a great persecution of the church began. The local church lost a great number of members, teachers, and leaders; some were killed (like Stephen), while others fled the area. This no doubt affected the very society around them. Was this a bad thing or a good thing? Consider what is stated in Acts 8:4: Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Being “scattered” was not their choice, but the change that was forced on them. But their reaction to that change was to go everywhere preaching the word. Now we see that the answer to the question was that a bad change ultimately produced great results.

God’s constantly injects change into our lives. Consider the statements in Psalm 102:23-28. The author tells God that “I don’t want to change”. But as he considers the nature of the world, he realizes that God changes everything. Then he sees that in time others would have the opportunity to rise up before God, and saw that if things didn’t change, nothing would ever get better. Change is hard and painful, but it is necessary to produce growth.

We see Mark 4 and the Parable of the Soils. The experience of growth was based on change. Growing out of the soil, growing through the brambles and producing fruit is an excellent comparison to the experience of the church in Jerusalem. The members received the word, they removed the stones in their way (Acts 6), and then in tribulation overcame and produced fruit. Change is the tribulation that scatters the seed.

Life is about change. In biology, growing up and growing old is all about change. We think a baby is cute, but if that baby never grew up, if in 40 years a man still needed to be fed and changed, we would see only a tragedy. So it is with spiritual growth. The absence of change is a tragedy.

Our church has seen a lot of change. That means we have a lot of opportunity to grow. We will do this by our focus as a body and our focus as members. We need to consider “how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24) that we might use these changes to become more.