

## Faithfulness Through Change- Believe Series (Part 3)

By Paul Hudson, May 5th, 2019

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We've all been dropped into a life filled with uncertainty and change. The sun comes up, the sun goes down and we cannot predict what awaits us in the coming day or night. Physically speaking, the only thing that is constant is the fact that everything is constantly changing. Do you know how much my belly has grown in the last 3 years? If you haven't been rocked by the unforgiving changes of your physical body, just wait, that day is coming, I promise!

As if the physical changes aren't enough, the values, beliefs, dedication, allegiances, truthfulness, the very moral character of people, change almost by the minute. We are wishy-washy... Broken promises abound everywhere. Who hasn't felt the pain of a trusted one failing to uphold his or her word? All of us have been hurt by people who have broken our trust, rescinded a promise, or had a sudden change of heart. We've been the victim; we've also been the perpetrator—we've all dropped the ball or failed to follow through with our word at one time or another.

Further, we live in a Post-Christendom age. \*The American culture has deviated away from the general assumption that Christianity is the unquestioned moral guide, so people are left to align themselves with whatever beliefs satisfy their own desires. As great numbers of people have turned away from the Christian faith, churches have been stung by the dwindling numbers of the faithful. Decimated by the crushing losses of faithful parishioners, faithful volunteers, faithful pastors, deacons and elders, churches everywhere have been forced to make drastic adjustments or shut their doors permanently. The faithful who remain look around and wonder what has brought about all this change? Is this God's doing, did He change? Well, those who face that question can truly come to only one logical conclusion.... \*people change and the world changes along with them. Things get old, fall apart, and

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lose their luster. The mind changes, the heart changes, and people turn to whatever satisfies them at the moment.

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So, let's take a few moments to analyze this problem. First, for the purposes of this message, I want to analyze \*these negative effects of change that I just shared. First, everything is decaying and dying, so everything is constantly changing to reflect that. We have no control over this, we were dropped into a world that is wasting away, death is imminent, negative changes are happening all around us. The ones we love and hold dear are with us for just a short time. The things we've worked so hard to attain break down on us. Over time, our memories distort or fail us. Decay and death are forced upon us, slowly choking the life out of us and incessantly reminding us that nothing lasts forever. Decay and death remind us that we are finite and mortal, so we spend our lives trying to fix, cover up, delay, or hide from the inevitable. The threat of decay and death affects our lives to the point that we resign ourselves to the belief that everything changes, and nothing stays the same... so why should we really care too much about anything?

This leads to another damaging effect of change: \*if something doesn't satisfy us enough then we move on in search of something else that is more gratifying—we are fickle beings. In this sense, our devotion and allegiance, our dedication, and even our beliefs will only last as long as our perceived needs are being fulfilled. As soon as the satisfaction with that thing disappears, we're out the door. Or if someone isn't satisfying us the right way then we treat them differently or avoid them altogether.

\*In essence, these agents of negative change that I am talking about here, decay, death, and the aimless search for self-gratification, can be traced all the way back to one deviant action: unfaithfulness. It was unfaithfulness that brought death upon us in the first place and caused the human heart to lose its sense of

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fulfilled purpose. Death and decay were brought into this world by Adam and Eve's unfaithfulness to God. It is this unfaithfulness, one way or another, that leads to changing values, beliefs, allegiances, and the loss of moral behavior. Adam and Eve's lack of trust in God's Word fundamentally changed the very core of their beings, unleashed the unquenchable thirst for self-gratification and self-fulfillment apart from God, and brought an even greater bent toward unfaithfulness and faithlessness. From that point on, unfaithfulness, especially to God, has drastically affected relationships, the choices people make, and ways of life.

I could go on, but it seems like the underlying problem is \*changeableness is built into who we are, we are changing every second, every day, and the fickleness of our hearts bounces us around like pinballs from one fad to the next. Unfaithfulness and faithlessness seem to be fundamental part of who we are-- It's quite disconcerting.

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Thank God the story does not end there! Let's take a look at a few Scriptures that I believe provide the clues to resolving our problem. First, Psalm 102:25-27- this Psalm is titled "the prayer of an afflicted person who has grown weak."

*"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same and you will never end." (Psalm 102:25-27).*

Think about this-- God created a world for us that changes by the design of His hands. So why should we be surprised or upset when things around us change? Change is in God's design. Here's the important part, even as God instigates change in this world, God Himself remains the same. Let's dwell on this attribute of God for a minute—God remains the same, He does not

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change. And God's unchangeableness leads into God's faithfulness. I did a little study on the meaning of God's faithfulness:

Faithfulness is a part of God's ethical nature. When Moses asked God what His name was, God said \*"Yahweh," meaning, "I Am who I Am," which, in the context, expresses God's unchangeable faithfulness to His gracious promises. He is constant and unshakeable in His relations with people. Faithfulness is likewise bound to His truth and unchangeableness. God is faithful and true in that He never breaks His promises—most notably his promises of deliverance and salvation; He is trustworthy, and his ethical nature is unchangeable. This means, as Numbers 23:19 states, that God cannot lie. Further, God's unchangeableness and faithfulness is often connected to His mercy and love. Have you ever sung this song? \*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness." (Lam. 3:22-23).

\*In the New Testament, the faithfulness of God to His promise of salvation and deliverance is manifested in Jesus and the forgiveness of sins-- and this is where God's faithfulness begins to touch us in powerful ways! The Apostle Paul emphasizes God's faithfulness in that neither unbelief nor faithlessness are able to nullify God's promises. 2 Timothy 2:13 states "if we are faithless, He remains faithful..." God's faithfulness does not depend on us, He is faithful because faithfulness is His nature—the Bible says that God is faithful for His own sake. Even in God's dissatisfaction with all of humankind, He has remained true to what He has said He would do. He has not changed His love, mercy, and grace toward us, and all of His promises are Yes and Amen. This is where we start to encounter the Gospel...

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\*Let's look at the key passage for this message, 2 Cor. 4:16-18. This is the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian church about our present weakness and the hope of a future resurrection life. So,

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Paul is speaking to the very problem of decay, death, and this troubling state of humankind--

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4:16-18 NIV)*

Therefore we do not lose heart when everything seems to be falling apart around us-- Outwardly, we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day... outwardly things are getting old, breaking down, yet inwardly, by the work of the Holy Spirit, we are being mended and renewed each and every day. The key part of this is the work of the Holy Spirit within us—faithfulness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. So as the Holy Spirit is renewing us within, He is mysteriously establishing His faithfulness within us.

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My friends will you look beyond what is seen and fix your eyes on what is unseen? We live by faith not by sight. Remember this word when you are beaten down and worn out. When faithlessness has crept into your heart and your life has taken a turn for the worst, give yourself to God. \*Let your weary soul rest in the amazing, awe-inspiring design of His change and remember that God is faithful. You are being renewed every single day on the inside by His eternal Spirit. Let faithfulness become you. Let your faithfulness to God grow every day, then you will feel the life of the Holy Spirit begin to swallow up your mortal body. Let faithfulness become you. Let your relationships with people not be about what you can get but, rather, reveal the grace, mercy, and love of God to people around you. Be faithful and true to your neighbors, your friends, your loved ones, your spouse despite whatever pain, hurt, or decay has taken place—let

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your unsaved friends, even your enemies see that there is another way. Remember that God has been merciful, gracious, and loving to us even while our hearts were far from him—in the same way, let your faithfulness to God and others become an ingrained part of your character.

My friends, never lose heart. What we see here is temporary and given over to change but don't forget that change is in God's design- he renews the heavens and the earth, and he renews the most important part of us, our inward being.

\*For every child of God, the changes that are experienced throughout a lifetime are God's handiwork, made to reveal His eternal layers of glory within the redeemed soul. On this earth, if you believe in Jesus and that He rose from the dead, your inward being has entered into a process of transformation that will be brought to perfection when you yourself are resurrected by the power of Jesus and given an eternal home in the presence of the unchangeable, faithful God. Until that glorious day, let us be changed each and every day into the image of Christ Jesus. Amen.

I'd like to turn to our focus to our church to finish this message. When I first came here three years ago I heard someone say in a lamenting way, "we need to change." Well, I want to say that we already have changed, we are changing, and we will change even more. Change is not what we need to worry about, and we don't need to worry about God's faithfulness through changes, all we need to check is where does our faithfulness reside? Are we faithful to the God who never changes or are we holding on for dear life to the worn out garments that God wants to renew? To finish, I found a message from the late Pastor Harlow Willard. This is taken from the retro version of the Rose Hill Presbyterian Church Messenger written in December of 1975. I found this a while ago in an archive of old church newsletters stored in the loft

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behind the cross. I never knew the man, but I have a deep respect for Pastor Harlow Willard. These were his words to his congregation when the foundations for this new sanctuary were being laid. The old sanctuary had burned down and, if you could picture this with me, this lot where we sit right now, in Dec. of 1975, was a messy, muddy construction zone with concrete and rebar jutting into the air—piles of construction waste here and there—not a pretty site. This is what Pastor Willard wrote:

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- C L I P P I N G S -

Rose Hill Presbyterian Church  
December - 1975  
Number 65



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I stand shivering in the cold and the mud looking at gray concrete walls and footings. This will be a place of color, warmth, beauty, light, laughter, life-changing power, love and worship? Yes, by God's grace as His people press forward in obedience to a vision. What will make this spot produce such a miracle? Not just the building of a beautiful sanctuary. I have visited great cathedrals in various parts of the world and have not heard or seen warm overflowing worship and joyous celebration of love by God's people. I have been left very cold and empty inside by such experiences. Only the beauty of the temple of God within His people will transform the houses of worship into true glory.

The apostle, Paul, puts it this way: "We who believe are carefully joined together with Christ as parts of a beautiful growing temple for God. And you are also joined with him and with each other by the Spirit and are part of this dwelling place of God." (Eph. 2:21-22, Living Bible)

The builders are putting together our new sanctuary. Will it be a source of God's overflowing glory and grace? You and I hold the answer as we carefully build each day our structure of faith.'

## MAN MAKING

We are blind until we see  
That in the human plan  
Nothing is worth the making if  
It does not make the man.

Why build these cities glorious  
If man unfinished goes?  
In vain we build the work, unless  
The builder also grows.

Edwin Markham

"But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,  
Jesus Christ..." II Pet. 3:18

- HARLOW WILLARD

