

# “GROWING A CHURCH” – AT WHAT PRICE?

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## **Introduction**

Some brethren will do almost anything to bring numerical and financial growth to a congregation. They will mutilate, innovate, and obfuscate the Gospel in order to have it. “Growth (as they define it)-at-whatever-price” is the demon that drives them.

The cry for change in the Lord’s church has been heard with increasing frequency and intensity in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Those calling for change in the church seem determined to effect it at whatever cost it may exact on the body of Christ. This cry is heard in various books that our brethren have written (e.g., *The Church in Transition*, by Jim Woodroof, *The Cruciform Church*, by Leonard Allen, *Navigating the Winds of Change*, by Lynn Anderson). It is heard in various journals and papers (e.g., *Wineskins*, *Christian Chronicle*). It is heard in speeches made at lectureships, conferences, and workshops (e.g., Nashville Jubilee, Tulsa Soul-winning Workshop, unity forums with the Independent Christian Church, and various university lectureships). Besides the books that have been written, articles and even workshops are now appearing more frequently that provide instruction on how to accomplish unauthorized changes in local churches. The workshops on “how to grow a church” are generally conducted by liberals who have little respect for Scriptural Truth and who have gotten their ideas from denominational sources rather than from the Bible.

The change advocates justify their agenda on the following bases, among others:

### ***Culture***

According to them, many things found in the New Testament, which we have always considered to be obligatory constants (e.g., excluding women from leadership roles in worship), were only due to the “culture” in which the saints lived in the first century. They thus aver that we are not bound by many apostolically ordained practices.

### ***Tradition***

Supposedly, many things in our practice (as noted above) are merely the products of human tradition (the way things have been done for a long time) and the change agents are seeking to cast them aside as rapidly as possible.

### ***Community Image, Popularity***

The liberals cry that we must prepare for the future by “keeping up with the times” (which equals aping the denominations). They decry our ignored (and sometimes despised) position in the community and especially our exclusivistic reputation among the sects.

According to them we must learn to get along with the denominations. If we expect to reach the “baby boomers” and “baby busters” we must “lighten up,” find out what appeals to them, and provide it.

### **Growth**

We are told that since we are not growing rapidly numerically we must change the church to produce growth. Usually, this means doing things that are far more appealing to the flesh than to the spirit in order to attract large crowds of people and their money (e.g., dramatic and theatric performances, concerts by such professional entertainers as the Accapella Vocal Band, et al.).

### **Some Preliminary Considerations**

What shall we say to this cry? To answer this question we must first determine what changes the compromising change-pushers have in mind. Are they talking about needed changes in the lives of individual Christians? Most certainly, there is the never-ending need for each of us to constantly examine ourselves and to make necessary changes in our attitudes and behaviors if they are not in harmony with the Lord and His Word (2 Cor. 13:5).<sup>2</sup> Even the best of God’s children need to be more zealous, loving, generous, pure, and dedicated to our Master. Otherwise, Romans through Revelation would be largely superfluous. This personal growth is what we are attempting to accomplish as we teach and exhort one another from the Gospel. Were these the changes for which they clamor we could heartily join their crusade. However, it is obvious to all that they have other changes in mind.

If they are crying for changes in optional matters (e.g., what time to meet, whether to build or rent a place to assemble, et al.), then we could agree that some changes would at least be permissible (albeit, not necessarily expedient or productive). However, great latitude has existed through the years and continues to exist among brethren on these and a host of other optional matters for the most part. Since liberal brethren continue to cry for change, we must conclude that their lust for change pertains to matters beyond mere options.

The change agents have only one area left with which to tamper—the element of obligatory items in the Gospel. Surely, none of our brethren would advocate changes in these! Oh, but they would—and they **are** advocating these very changes! Sadly, many in the church are so ignorant that they **cannot**, or they are so liberal that they **will** not, distinguish between optional and obligatory elements of the Gospel. They combine these unlike classes of things as if they were alike and were of equal importance (or unimportance) in a classic demonstration of “mixing apples and oranges.” A notable example came from the pen of Bill Minick, upon his return from the notorious Joplin, Missouri, “Restoration Summit” in August 1984. He listed the

disparate issues of divorce and remarriage, Sunday Schools, individual communion cups, carnal warfare, instrumental music in worship, missionary societies, proper division of the covenants, baptismal formula, and ladies wearing pants in the assembly as all in the same class.<sup>3</sup> To Minick, these were all optional matters of equal insignificance that should not be barriers to fellowship between the Independent Christian Church (ICC) and congregations of the Lord's people.

In a similar vein, Larry James (as have/do others) misused Romans 14 by failing to note that the issues Paul discussed therein were matters of option which one may or may not do and still please God in either case. However, James applied Paul's principle of Christian forbearance in optional matters to the use of instrumental music in worship. Consequently, he calls the ICC folk his "stronger brethren" because they can use the instrument without violation of conscience, while he calls us who cannot conscientiously use the instrument his "weaker brethren."<sup>4</sup> He thus makes no distinction at all between optional and obligatory items or between the changeable and the changeless. As a matter of fact, apples and oranges are more alike in some respects than some of the things such liberal brethren confuse.

Other chapters in this volume will deal in detail with specific obligatory doctrines and practices the changers insist on changing, so we will only make brief mention of some of these for the sake of illustration.

### ***The Plan of Salvation***

There is no more fundamental doctrine to the religion of Christ than God's plan of salvation, by which the alien sinner is forgiven of his sins through the blood of Christ. Even this doctrine is under assault by the liberals among us. We first heard these rumblings in modern times in the early 1960s when some began accusing that we (members of the church generally and Gospel preachers specifically) had emphasized "the plan" too much and "the Man [Christ]" not enough. Subsequently, various ones have ridiculed as "five-steppers" those who faithfully preach the Lord's saving plan (i.e., that alien sinners must (1) hear the Gospel, (2) believe in Jesus as the Christ, (3) repent of their sins, (4) confess their faith in Christ before others, and (5) be baptized in order to receive the remission of sins). In their zeal for change some have even tried to credit the fiery nineteenth-century evangelist, Walter Scott, rather than the Lord and His apostles, with this plan. We once heard a pulpit misfit preach that if Scott had had only four digits on his hand we would have only four steps in "our plan!"

Sectarians have preached a "grace only" plan since the sixteenth century, but now more and more brethren are preaching it. K.C. Moser began urging this change in the plan of salvation in his books as early as the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Glen Owen (at the time an elder, Highland

Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas) once declared in a sermon, “Nobody has any right to preach anything other than the Gospel of pure grace. We are saved by grace plus nothing. You are saved by faith period. There is nothing you can do to be saved.”<sup>6</sup> Rubel Shelly has pontificated, “It is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. We do not contribute one whit to our salvation.”<sup>7</sup> Jim Hackney (preacher, Midtown Church of Christ, Fort Worth, Texas) wrote: “I spent too many years of my Christian life not knowing what **grace** was. The only thing I knew for sure was that ‘we’ didn’t believe in it.”<sup>8</sup>

Jimmy Allen, resurrecting David Lipscomb’s nineteenth century error, wrote an entire book in 1991 to expound the thesis that the sinner does not need to understand the Scriptural purpose of baptism in order for it to be acceptable to God.<sup>9</sup> Rubel Shelly enthusiastically endorsed the Allen book on its back cover. Does anyone doubt that the changers want to change our Lord’s plan of salvation into one more to their liking and more attractive to the world?

### ***Worship***

Liberals are urging grievous compromises and changes in worship. Instrumental music in worship is now preached as a thing of mere option or personal conscience, rather than as an unauthorized, sinful, and damning practice. Few (if any) of even the most liberal among us are openly advocating that the instrument be used in worship, although they may as well do so. At the rate they are moving, some of them will be doing so before long. However, more and more of them have jumped on the bandwagon to use special “presentation music” (i.e., solos, choirs, etc.) in their worship assemblies. Other worship innovations borrowed from the denominations (e.g., responsive readings, parallel worship assemblies, applause [during sermons and announcements, at baptisms, etc.], lifting up fluttering hands, et al.) are all the rage among some brethren.

### ***Women’s Leadership Roles***

Some brethren (male and female) got caught up in the “women’s lib” movement in the 1970s and began applying some of its demands to the church. Accordingly, an increasing number of them are working to thrust women into church leadership roles not authorized by the Gospel. Some congregations began using women at the Lord’s Table and to lead prayers in mixed assemblies a few years ago. Some have appointed them as deaconesses while others have announced their agenda to eventually appoint them as elders (“eldresses”?) and put them in the pulpit.

### ***Hermeneutics***

Some are zealously pushing for a change in the principles of interpretation of the Bible, (i.e., a “new hermeneutic”). They say that arriving at the meaning or application of a passage by such time-tested principles as direct statement, implication, accounts of action, the law of inclusion and exclusion, and respecting the silence as well as the statement of Scripture are all flawed and outmoded. Besides, the “old hermeneutic” principles make us appear self-righteous, judgmental, and legalistic to their denominational peers! They thus urge upon us a hermeneutic of their own concoction that will allow the sects to remain in their errors while we extend fellowship to them anyway.

### ***Fellowship***

Some have issued the call for a change in our understanding of fellowship. They say we have been too narrow, too restrictive, too exclusivistic, too unbending. They have invented an ingenious explanation of the “one faith” of Ephesians 4:5. Instead of its referring to “the faith”—the entire Gospel (v. 13; Acts 6:7; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; Jude 3; et al.)—the change devotees say it refers only to the atonement. Their new understanding of 2 John 9 is that “the teaching of Christ” is merely a reference to the teaching **about** the Deity of Christ, rather than a reference to all of the Truth of which Christ and His inspired men was the source. Thus, the worshipers at the altar of change tell us that as long as someone believes in the atonement Christ made and the Deity He possessed we should call him “brother.” It is not necessary for us to agree with others on doctrinal matters (e.g., worship practices, whether or not Christ will have a millennial earthly kingdom, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, et al.) in order to fellowship them. After all, according to them, fellowship does not imply endorsement and one must not impose guilt merely by association, although this is precisely in 2 John 10–11!

### ***The Nature of the Church***

Some long ago changed their attitude toward the nature of the church. They conceive of it as merely a denomination among denominations. They have reached a point in their thinking where they no longer believe in the ideal of primitive Christianity in the modern world. “We need a twenty-first century church, not a first century church,” is their theme. They are not concerned about the distinctive pattern for the church—indeed, they deny that there is such. They would have us believe that the only pattern for the church is the personal life of Christ, and that Acts through Revelation give us only a flawed picture of the church.<sup>10</sup> They and their fellow travelers are now speeding down the road that leads to the swamps and quicksands of unmitigated denominationalism.

The foregoing examples will suffice to demonstrate that significant winds of change and compromise are blowing through the brotherhood. Some congregations have already changed so much that they are unrecognizable as churches of Christ. They are dishonest to continue to retain a sign on their property, which reads “Church of Christ.” Many congregations are in various stages of change that will eventuate in their utter apostasy and loss if they persist.

Why have they changed in their practice and purpose, yea in their very nature? The answer is because they have changed the message they teach and preach. As the seed is to the plant, so is the religious message to the product that it produces. The seed of the kingdom of God (the church) is still the Word (Luke 8:10–11). Seed still brings forth only after its own kind, both in the physical and the spiritual realm (Gen. 1:11–12; Gal. 6:7). Just as one cannot produce corn from grass burr seed, neither can one produce the church of Christ from the evil seed of a corrupted “gospel.”

The practice of the church follows—and is the result of—the doctrine fed to it. It is this simple: **Maintain the true message and you maintain the correct practice; Corrupt the message and you corrupt the practice.** The Lord God has only one plant (the church of His Son) and it proceeds from only one seed (the Gospel of His Son). Those who demand change in the church and who are accomplishing their demand by compromising the Gospel need to ponder well the Lord’s ominous warning: “Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up” (Mat. 15:13b).

### **The Bases of the Unchangeable Gospel**

The Gospel, as delivered to us in the New Testament, is unchanged, having been preserved in God’s gracious providence for all time. Men have incessantly tried to destroy it and alter it through its almost twenty centuries of existence, but it remains the immutable, never-changing, message of salvation and hope from the living, loving, God of Heaven. This principle, this fact, this Truth, is anchored in several factors.

#### ***God the Father Is Immutable***

The Psalms declare this truth: “Praise ye Jehovah. Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth forever” (Psa. 106:1; cf. 136:19). Malachi spoke of this attribute of Jehovah: “For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed” (3:6). John described the Father as “him who is and who was and who is to come” (Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8) and as “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 21:6). Paul described Jehovah God as “the eternal God” (Rom. 16:26). This eternal God has an unwavering “eternal purpose” (Eph. 3:11). Tillit S. Tedlie wrote faithfully when he wrote his beautiful hymn, “Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand.”

### ***God the Son Is Immutable***

The Son is as the Father in all of His attributes. The Jews of the first century correctly understood the law to teach that the Christ would be eternal: “The multitude therefore answered him, We have heard out of the law that the Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man” (John 12:34)? They likely had in mind the promise to David that God would set one of his descendents upon a throne, give him a kingdom, and build him a house that would be established forever (1 Chr. 17:10–14). Paul described the Christ as the “King eternal, immortal, invisible” (1 Tim. 1:17) and as Him “who only hath immortality, ...to whom be honor and power eternal” (6:16).

Because the Son of God is eternal and immortal, “he...hath his priesthood unchangeable” (Heb. 7:24). Paul further stated the unchanging nature of the Christ in explicit terms: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever” (13:8). Jesus identified Himself to John in a significant way on Patmos:

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades (Rev. 1:17–18).

He identified Himself in similar words near the close of John’s vision: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (22:13). All of these and many other passages either imply or explicitly speak of the changeless nature of God’s Son.

### ***God the Holy Spirit Is Immutable***

Since God the father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one in their nature and attributes, it logically follows that, if the first two are immutable, the third must also be (2 Cor. 3:17; 13:14). However, Scripture contains some strong hints concerning His immutability. Jesus promised the apostles that when He sent the Spirit upon them, He would abide (i.e., keep on abiding, not change from abiding) with them (John 14:17). If Christ was changeless in what He taught, then so was the Holy Spirit, because He did not speak to the apostles from Himself, but He spoke the things the Son gave Him to speak (16:13). Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as “the eternal Spirit” through whom Christ offered Himself unto God (Heb. 9:14).

### ***The Gospel Is the Message of the Godhead to Sinful Man***

The Gospel is the consummate plan of God for the salvation of man from sin and its consequence of eternal condemnation. It is the revelation of the mysterious salvation the prophets yearned to see and about which the angels were curious (1 Pet. 1:10–12). It is therefore styled the “Gospel of God” eight times by the inspired writers (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 The. 2:2, 8–9; 1 Pet. 4:17; et al.). God is immutable, and so must be His Gospel.

The Gospel is especially associated with Christ because there could have been no Gospel (no salvation—hence no message of salvation) without His atoning death on the cross. No fewer than ten times the inspired writers referred to the Gospel as belonging to or proceeding from Christ (Mark 1:1; Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 9:12; 2 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27; et al.). If the Son of God is immutable then so must be His Gospel.

The Gospel is also associated closely with the Holy Spirit as the Revealer of it. The Spirit was sent upon the apostles to reveal to them all of the Gospel Truth (John 16:13). The mystery of God’s plan for man’s redemption was at last revealed to inspired men through the Spirit in the very words, which the Spirit taught them (1 Cor. 2:10, 13). The men who preached the Gospel in the first century did so by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:12). The Gospel message of the great salvation was also confirmed by miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:19; 1 The. 1:5; Heb. 2:3–4). Since the Holy Spirit is immutable then so must be the Gospel He has revealed and confirmed.

The immutability of the Godhead is the very foundation of the immutability of the Gospel!

### **Some Reasons Why We Must Not Change the Gospel**

#### ***It Is Blood Bought***

Jesus described the blood He shed on Calvary as “my blood of the covenant [new testament, KJV]” (Mat. 26:28). It took the shedding of His blood to empower the saving terms of pardon in the Gospel. Had He not died there would have been no Gospel. There is no greater price that could have been paid than the blood of the only perfect man who ever lived and this is the price the Lord paid for the Gospel. If cost provides any indication of the value of the purchased item, then the Gospel—just as we have it in the New Testament—without any alteration, is of greater worth than any human can imagine or calculate. The fact that Jesus bought the Gospel with His perfect blood should serve as a powerful warning that we dare not change it in any way

#### ***It Is the Power of God to Save***

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Man has no message or plan whereby he can save himself. The Gospel as given by God—and nothing besides the Gospel, either more or less than the Gospel—is God’s power to save. The reason this is so is because it reveals to us God’s plan for our salvation through the death of Christ as the sacrifice for our sins. When men pervert it they make it into something other than the Gospel: “I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different

gospel; which is not another gospel only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6–7). Any message that purports to be the Gospel, but which differs from the Gospel, is not really the Gospel. There is only one saving Gospel.

### ***The Curse of God Is Upon Anyone Who Changes It***

To the Galatians who had accepted a perverted “gospel,” Paul warned:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema (Gal. 1:8–9).

One can hardly frame stronger words of warning in human language. False teachers, men who had perverted the Gospel, had infiltrated the congregations in Galatia that Paul had established (v. 7). Paul expressed amazement that these congregations had so quickly accepted a perverted “gospel” (v. 6). The Corinthian brethren had also received such purveyors of a changed “gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4).

Paul not only pronounced judgment on those false teachers in particular in Galatians 1, but also upon all others, including any apostle (“we,” v. 8), any heavenly messenger (“an angel,” v. 8), or any earthly messenger (“any man,” v. 9) who would dare change the Gospel he had originally preached and they had obeyed. The judgment upon all such consists of the anathema, the curse, of God—to be doomed to the direst of woes and irreparable destruction. Of course, this damnation refers to the worst degree of torment in eternal Hell! God does not have the least patience with those who rearrange His immutable Word to suit themselves.

This being the case, we shudder to think of the fate of millions of preachers in various religious bodies who preach a mutilated, perverted “gospel.” We think also of those in our own ranks who are not content with the Gospel, but who have streamlined it to make it more palatable to the masses, whether to try to force growth in a congregation, to keep their jobs, to appear more erudite, or for whatever reason. The curse of God is surely upon them! The tragedy of all of this is compounded when we consider that the multiplied millions of those who are following the Gospel-changers, whether in or out of the church, are likewise being led to destruction (Gal. 1:7; 5:4; cf. Mat. 15:14). Dear reader, may this stringent warning of judgment preserve us from the temptation to tamper with this most precious treasure—the Gospel—God has placed in our hands (2 Cor. 4:7).

A great irony is observable in the behavior of the Galatians and the Corinthians. Error had become more palatable to them than the Truth of God and false teachers more attractive than an apostle of Christ. Paul, from whom the Galatians had heard the saving Gospel and who they had earlier received as an “angel of God,” had to plead with them not to count him

their enemy for telling them the truth and exposing the errors of their new teachers (Gal. 4:14–16). The Corinthians could not bear with Paul, who had brought them the Gospel, and was trying to rescue them from the error they had embraced. They had, however, readily accepted those who preached a strange “Jesus” and a different “gospel” which would damn their souls (2 Cor. 11:1–4).

It is no different now. The masses seem quite willing to believe almost anything in religion as long as it is not in the Bible. This strange phenomenon explains (at least in part) why such weird systems of doctrine (e.g., Mormonism, Christian Science, Premillennialism, New Ageism, Jehovah’s Witness cultism, et al.) continue to attract converts. “The weirder the better” seems to be the policy of millions in matters of religion.

Alas, it is little better among the elect. More and more elderships have shown their pleasure in keeping a preacher (sometimes at a most handsome salary) who preaches a different “gospel.” The large, metropolitan churches are especially fond of the toned-down, tortured, and compromised “gospel” which so many now preach. We may as well face the fact that such congregations are lost to the cause and likely can never be reclaimed. Administrators in most schools, which were founded and are operated by brethren, have demonstrated their affinity for those who have some new and different message. (This is true both in their classrooms and in their lectureships and workshops. Their clever response to those who expose their support of error is to simply deny that it exists, all the while defending the errorist!) Never mind that it is not the Gospel. Never mind that it is not really new, but is merely the old, error-laden message of sectarianism (which only sounds new to many brethren because they had heard so little of it in a favorable light until fairly recently).

Such elders and administrators would not knowingly allow a man who has no better sense than to preach the Gospel “without fear or favor” within five miles of their respective pulpits or lecturns. This is perhaps the ultimate demonstration of bartering one’s birthright of the pure, unadulterated Gospel of the Son of God for a mess of pottage that is not only inferior, but also damnable to boot.

When an advocate of the simple Gospel message mounts the podium they have no patience for him or it. If they listen at all it is only to pity, wag the head in disagreement, and criticize one who is so behind the times as to still preach only the Bible. If a Truth-bearer dare suggest correction of the error of lusting after and embracing a strange “gospel,” those thus affected quickly pounce upon him as their worst enemy. In their view, the favorite occupation of the sound Gospel preacher is to harp on brotherhood “issues,” stir controversy, cause trouble,

and alienate brethren. In short, we become the personal enemies of all progress and of those who have adopted a perverted message and the perverted religion it is producing.

When this writer was a young preacher (the 1960s, 1970s), those who were true to the Gospel in their preaching were almost universally honored, esteemed, supported, and used. Those who were on the liberal lunatic fringe were not tolerated, whether in print, in the pulpit, or on our college campuses. This is now to a great degree reversed. That these things are happening before our very eyes only demonstrates how little human nature has changed over the centuries. Paul had to deal with rejection from brethren in Galatia and Corinth, not because he preached error, but because he preached the Truth. So must we do now—an irony of huge proportions among those who claim to be the church of the Living God.

### **Conclusion**

Solomon long ago had some words of wisdom for all of those who think compromise and change for the sake of change are as necessary as breathing: “My son, fear thou Jehovah and the king; And company not with them that are given to change” (Pro. 24:21). It is significant that those who are so much urging change in our teaching and practice are those who do not fear Jehovah. In fact, they consider the concept of fear of God to be heresy. Those who have a Scriptural fear for the Almighty would not dare to presume to either augment or diminish the Gospel by one iota.

There is also a warning in Solomon’s words for those who do fear God: “Company not with them that are given to change.” There is already a wide breach between brethren, but it is destined to grow wider and finally become an unbridgeable chasm, even as it did a century ago. On the one hand there are those of us who, like Paul, are determined to shrink not from “declaring the whole counsel of God” and who are “set for the defence of the gospel” (Acts 20:27; Phi. 1:16). On the other hand there are many who have ceased to “give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard [the Gospel]” and they have already “drifted away from them” (Heb. 2:1). These are those who can no longer be content with the purity and simplicity of the primitive Gospel. While we remain firmly rooted in the apostles’ doctrine, they have cut themselves loose from its restrictions. They are still in the drifting and changing process. The full extent of their eventual apostasy is any man’s guess, but many of them have adopted seed principles sufficiently corrupt to take them to full-blown denominational status. It is not a question of **whether** we must cease to have any company with them, but only one of **when**. Some are already so far gone that fellowshiping them would be little different from fellowshiping the Disciples of Christ denomination. Many others are well on their way down

the same wicked path. The cause of it all is their willingness to change the unchangeable Gospel.

The Gospel is the incorruptible seed, “the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet. 1:23, KJV). Men may alter it, add to it, take out what they find offensive or unnecessary, mutilate it, explain it away, and make merchandise of it, or abuse it in a thousand other ways. However, when they get through with their evil work, it will still be stubbornly, doggedly standing there as God’s perfect will for man on earth and His perfect standard for man at the Judgment. After all, men do not really change the Gospel—it stands as God gave it. When men begin to tamper and toy with the Gospel, it becomes merely another false religious message that will damn the souls of both those who preach it and those who follow it.

“Yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). “If we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim. 2:12–13). “He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

### Endnotes

1. Some portions of this chapter were first published in a slightly different form in *Changes in the Church of Christ*, ed. Bobby Liddell (Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1994).
2. All Scripture quotations from Scripture are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.
3. Dub McClish, *The Current “Unity Movement”—Its History, Status, and Direction* (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1990 ed.), p. 25.
4. McClish, p. 17.
5. K.C. Moser, *The Way of Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1932); *The Gist of Romans* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Pub. Co., rev. ed., 1958).
6. Glen Owen, from tapes of sermons delivered at Midtown Church of Christ, Forth Worth, TX, 1982.
7. Rubel Shelly, *Love Lines* (Woodmont Hills Church of Christ bulletin, Nashville, TN, Oct. 31, 1990, p. 3).
8. Jim Hackney, *The Grapevine* (Midtown Church of Christ Bulletin, Fort Worth, TX, Jan. 23, 1991), p. 2.
9. Jimmy Allen, *Re-baptism* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub. Co., 1991).
10. Rubel Shelly and Randy Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub. Co., 1992).

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