

Seasons of Change and the Local Church

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[0 : 0 0] But testimony today, today I am 48 years old. I do not look that old, do I? I was born again, March the 5th, 1975, Wednesday night at 8.30 p.m.

Brother Carson Judah preaching on Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. And I got Christ living in me that night. And I'm glad to be saved. And I got saved because my best friend, three weeks earlier, on a Monday morning, I worked at a paper mill.

And he came in and they had a different look on his face. And I knew him real well. He's my best friend. I said, well, Roger, what happened to you? And he said, I got saved yesterday. Now, what I said that day is not on the docket anymore.

But for three weeks, I could not rest. And I wanted to get saved before that. But I got to church that night. After three weeks, he witnessed to me. And that's all he said.

I got saved on a Wednesday night. Man, I am tickled to be saved. And it's good or snuff and not half as dusty. Amen, amen. So it is. And so I got in the church wide open and as hard as I could.

[1 : 1 3] And my wife didn't know anything much about anything about her being lost or anything. And she was tempted to leave me there during those three weeks.

But 19 days later, she got down on the living room floor and got saved. And so praise God. I praise God for salvation every day, all day for her and myself.

And I got into a good Bible-believing church. And before I ever got saved, I went down to the bookstore to get a Bible because I didn't have a Bible.

And this is in 1975. And that would have been in February. And I went into a Christian bookstore. And I said, I want a Bible. And I didn't know anything about Bibles. And she said, well, what kind?

I said, I want the Holy Bible. I knew that. She took me to the back part of the Christian bookstore on the top shelf was the King James Bible.

[2 : 0 8] And she said, it says Holy Bible right here. Is that what you want? I said, that's what I want. And I got it that day and went to that church in the King James Bible-believing church. And I thank God for that.

I've never had trouble with another version at all. Except sometimes they don't light your fire real good. In the fireplace. All right, okay. So I started preaching just a little while after that on a Sunday afternoon at the Southern Baptist Mission down in the lower parts of the echelon and, you know, human beings in the Bay Area.

Bay Harbor is what it was, not Bay Area. And I started preaching to little 8, 10, 12-year-old basically street kids. And from then on, all I wanted to do was preach.

And that's what I told the Lord I wanted to do. And I went to a little place called Gulf Coast Seminary. I got a doctor's degree in that, but I didn't figure that was good enough. And I got introduced to Dr. Ruckman's books.

And my Sunday school teacher was teaching out of those books. And I went down there with Brother Edward Cutchin. And we checked that thing out.

[3 : 21] And Marty Few was preaching that night on Psalm chapter 5 and verse 11, let them ever shout for joy. And that was in the old building, a little bitty building. And it was elbow room only.

And Brother Marty Few got up on top of the pulpit and started preaching. And the place went wild. But the problem was, it was elbow to elbow. We couldn't run.

We couldn't do anything. So we ran in place and screamed in place and shouted in place. Amen. So I decided that was the place I wanted to be. And I thank God for that. And I graduated in 81.

And I candidated for several churches around the south. And nobody wanted me. I never could figure out why, but they didn't. And Dan Gilbert wrote me a letter. We had a business together. We spent most of our time together.

And because of Dan Gilbert, I actually passed Hebrew. Amen. Thank God for Dan Gilbert. Anyway, she wrote me a letter. Said, California is wide open. But, see, my wife is from Lodi, California.

[4 : 17] And she's in glory now. She beat me there. And I'm upset with her because she beat me there. But anyway, she's from Lodi. And I'd come out here before I got saved. And I'm from the south, Panama City, Florida.

And she wanted to see her parents. And still lived in Lodi. And I went there. And I hated California. It moved too fast, everything. I go down the freeway, I-5. And the cars on the side of the road didn't have any glass in them.

And they had dits in their fenders and all down the side from people damaging the place. And I said, I've never seen a place like this. And I hated California. And then I got saved. And we got saved. We came out again.

And I said, Lord, I still hate California. And for a year, I tried to find a church that wanted me. And nobody wanted me. And I reminded the Lord I didn't want to go to California. But then I got that letter from Dan Gilbert.

He was in Tujunga then. That's when this church was in Tujunga. Actually, I got ordained in this church. But that was when it was in Tujunga. Brother Dave Gilbert and myself got, in 1986, we got ordained in this church, Bible Baptist Church, when it was Tujunga.

[5 : 24] But anyway, I said, well, Lord, there's no other place. I guess I'm just going to swallow my words and shut my mouth and not tell you anymore what I'm not going to do. All right? And that's how I got out here.

And I tried to start a church in Lodi for a year and a half and never did it. And during that time, I put Dr. Ruckman on the radio. And some people from Ruffin Redding, California, called me because they had heard Dr. Ruckman on that local radio station.

And they asked me if I was interested. So I went up there and candidated for the church. And lo and behold, they wanted me to come. That's because everybody had left. There was nine people left. But anyway, I got eight and a half people voted for me.

Eight and a half. One was a little kid. But anyway, I've been there ever since. And it's been a ride. I love it. I love the Lord. I love the preaching of the gospel. I love everything about it.

I am not regretting anything. And I actually have become a lover of California. I actually go around campaigning now, if you want to call it a campaign, for all these people not to leave California.

[6 : 29] But it's wide open. It's a mission filled and a half. And I'm trying to talk to Brother Walski now to get in some people to learn their language here instead of going over to Iran and Iraq and places everybody wants to go.

And learning the language for two years and paying them all that money while they learn the language. They can come right here. They can learn the language. They can go out here to these people here. And, you know, Tonga's here or whatever.

Koreans over here. And learn the language. So I thank God for Him putting me here. I plan on dying right here. Really, to tell you the truth, I'm planning on going up in the air.

I don't want to die. But if I do, I want to die right here in California. And I thank God for sending them here. And I thank God for sending Brother Walski and for you. And thank you for letting me have this few minutes. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

Amen. Thank you. That was good. That was brief. And you nailed it. Amen. Okay.

[7 : 30] I'm not going to add to that. So let's go to Ecclesiastes this morning, please. Find Ecclesiastes right after the Proverbs of Solomon. Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes.

Ecclesiastes. And I want to be in chapter 3 this morning. That's where we'll begin. And we'll just read the first verse together.

And then you can kind of skim through a little bit lower below. But for now, Ecclesiastes 3 and verse number 1, the Bible says, To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

And then there's a list from verses 2. You can just skim through to verse 8 of a variety of circumstances that we face in life. And it gives both sides of the coin.

A time to be born, a time to die. And to everything, there's a season. And one thing I see in this passage, and this just is kind of my jumping off place because it's really evident here, is that there's change in life.

[8 : 43] At one time you're this way and doing this, but at another time it's the opposite. At one time you're joyful, another time you're mourning. And there is seasons of change in life.

It's inevitable. And to some, that thought, that word is like, ugh, it's a dirty word. It's an unpleasant word. People don't want to deal with change.

It's a part of life that some people, they're just not very fond of. And I understand the older folks get that you seem to get set in your ways, and you're just content with doing it this way.

You just don't want to hear another option or another version. Or you don't appreciate the world coming up with new ideas and ways to do things and doing it faster and more complicated to you.

I get that. You don't like change. You're just satisfied. And it's hard to keep up. And the world goes on. And the world goes on. It's an unpleasant word to some, change.

[9 : 44] To others it's a popular word, especially come election time. Why, those fellows will run their entire campaign off of one word. Change. Real change.

Change we need. A vote for me is a vote for, how many times have we heard it? It's every couple years. And it's a popular word for somebody who's seeking an office or a fat paycheck.

And change can be good. And change can be necessary. It can be absolutely needed in some cases. And it's part of life. Change cannot be avoided. And therefore, because of that, I'd say it's of the Lord.

Now, change can be a result of sin. I'll mention that in a moment. But overall, in some of the circumstances of life, especially those listed in this chapter, change is of the Lord.

God could have fixed it so that this life was just smooth. No bumps. It's just great. And he kind of did promise that he would do that. He probably did originally, initially, attempt to do that.

[10 : 47] But, well, we didn't want that, apparently. And so we have to deal with change. And it can be unpleasant. It can be unpredictable. But there's plenty of it.

And now, before I go into this, I'm glad to know that we have a God that doesn't change. Yeah. Unlike the religions in this world, unlike the politicians or the kingdoms of this world, our God doesn't change.

They come and go. They flip and flop. But the Lord God himself, and the reason I'm saying this is it's best that you're anchored in him. And that you're anchored in his word that does not change.

Because this world and in this life, there's much change. The Bible says, I am the Lord. I change not. Jesus Christ yesterday, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The Bible says, I think it's in James chapter 1, he's the father of lights. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. And so we have an anchor that we can, or one that we can anchor in that will not change, while our lives do.

[11 : 53] But some things about change, before I get into the heart of the message, sin can cause change. Right away in Genesis chapter 3, major change to the program.

Why? Because they disobeyed the one command that God gave man and his wife. And sin brought about change. They were innocent. They were naked and unashamed. They had communion with God.

I mean, a paradise on earth. And they left it, in so many words, they were booted out. He was made a living soul. But the change, the sin brought about change so much that now they're guilty.

Now they're hiding. Eventually they're clothed, then banished. Now they're going to be working toil and sweat and sorrow. Life has changed for that couple.

Because of sin. Another thought is God can bring about change in people's lives. It may have nothing to do with sin at all, but God can himself bring about change.

[12 : 54] Consider the many times in the Bible of wars, of captivities. Read through the book of Judges. Joshua conquering land and the judges. That's the cycle through that of the ups and downs of generations of people.

And one after another, very dramatic, very life-altering events that took place through the kings and through the captivities. Many things there have changed, changed, changed all through it.

Consider, on the other hand, the disciples of Jesus Christ. Some were fishermen, and now they're fishers of men. While one is a vocation, a daily toil. The other one, now they're being sent out to preach and to minister the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

They're given power to heal and to raise the dead. I mean, the hands that pulled the nets in are now touching lepers and healing them. Talk about change.

I would imagine as those men could hardly believe what they're now doing. And you talk to some guys that are in the ministry today, they'd say the same thing. They used to do this, and they can't believe this is what I do for a living.

[14 : 00] I never thought in my life I'd be standing behind a pulpit. And opening up the Bible and not stuttering all over myself. Consider those that Jesus Christ healed in his ministry in the gospels.

They were paralyzed. They were leprous. They were dying slow and agonizing deaths. And then they get touched by Jesus Christ and change. They blind could see.

Their lives are forever changed. Their health and families are restored. So whether it's the hand of God or whether it's just simply the way God allowed this life to play out, change is unavoidable.

It's built in to life. And so there's seasons of life and there's seasons of change, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant. And so I want to look this morning at change within the body of Christ, yet specifically within the local church.

Change within the local church. And I've established it can be of the Lord. It can be a result of sin. It can just be the way it is. It's going to happen. Change is going to happen.

[15 : 13] Over time, it is absolutely impossible for any church to stay the same. It's impossible. You don't believe it because you feel like, no, we can.

But just look back at history of the church over the last 2,000 years of the body of Christ, and there is not one that remained the same.

If so, they'd be still having candles, no air conditioning, the dress you wouldn't even recognize. Otherwise, they've changed. With the times adapted as the people, the generations come and go, no one's remained the same.

And change will happen here. And I know this church has seen its share of change. Some of you that are still around, you've seen a lot of change. And it's going to continue to happen.

Change will happen as time goes on. And it's going to be evident in several ways. So I want to show you those ways here. And we'll look at them here in Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes, we're really not studying Ecclesiastes, but I'll pull some of these points out of the text here.

[16 : 19] So look at chapter 2. Ecclesiastes 2. I could probably go to some Pauline epistles here to make these same statements.

But we'll do it from the book we started. In Ecclesiastes 2, here's Solomon writing in verse 18. 2.18, he says, Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

There's a man. Solomon in his wisdom understood, I'm not going to be here forever. Everybody before me has come and gone. I also, sitting on my throne, am one day going to be in the grave.

Not on the throne anymore. Somebody's going to take my place. And as we see in a local church, number one, I'll say, the man. There's change, because there's, as Solomon calls it, he'll leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

God has consistently called, and consistently enabled, and led, and used men. Over the last 2,000 years. That's God's doing, it's working.

[17 : 29] And he's called these men, in some cases, to start, and to establish a work, and to labor, and to build, and to preach, and to grow a ministry.

But he's never kept any of them around for long. And when that thing is growing, and everybody's just pouring their hearts into it, they love it. And from God's perspective, it's just a vapor.

He's just doing it for a short time. God has not raised up a man to keep him here, or to keep him there, or anywhere. Be honest, it's true. Think on it.

Not one man, the greatest of preachers. Look through your Christian history. Look through your books of these men that have preached, and they're just, we think they're the greatest ones.

And how long did God keep them around? Maybe a full life. Maybe a 50-year ministry. 50 years? We're talking about the body of Christ. 2,000 years?

[18 : 30] I'm making the point here that God brings a man on, and he lets him go. Every single one. No exceptions. And over the course of history, no man has ever outlasted the church, even if he's the one that built it.

Individuals die. Great men pass on. And the church lives on, and there's change. There's change. It's by God's design. Why would God do that? Well, he didn't design men to last, did he?

And so this is the way God's done it. It's his doing. Think about Moses. Moses was a great leader. Incredible leader. And then he passed the torch on to Joshua and died.

And at that moment, his leadership, his wisdom, his counsel, his experience was gone. Nothing to pull from anymore. Because he's in the grave.

David was a great king. David won so many victories. He pushed the enemies of Israel back, far back. He established not just the land. He established the region. He was ruling and had dominion over all of it, and then he died.

[19 : 38] He grew old and died. He couldn't hang on, could he? What about John the Baptist? How long was John the Baptist's ministry? He was an important character, prophesied in two places in the Old Testament that I know of, that he would come, that he would be a shining light, and that he would pave the way or make ready a people.

And he's an important figure in the ministry of Jesus Christ. But just how long was his ministry? God raised him up for something important and powerful and change he brought on.

And then he's gone. Some people speculate that his ministry was only three months long. That sounds pretty short. But I definitely, from what I can tell, it's under two years.

Under two years, John? You're in prison, your head's off before you know it? For the ministry, for being raised up for that? That's pretty short-lived. But he was just making way for another.

It was his time to decrease, as he says in John 3. Now this truth reveals something to us. It reveals to us that the focus of every local church should never be on a man.

[20 : 57] Never. No man. There's two things that the focus of the local church should be on. And I think they're kind of like this.

I think they're kind of together. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's the Holy Word of God. The Holy Word of God. Those things don't change.

And if your focus or your love or if a man gets loved and venerated and worshipped and followed, it's not going to end well. It doesn't matter who it is. Any man. In a local church, those two things that don't change are the two things that matter the most.

And if a church is going to survive the change that God allows and brings about, they're going to have to be focused on Jesus Christ and on His Word. I witnessed in my life, I've been privileged to witness one of the smoothest transitions that will ever take place.

I understand that some of you here have witnessed probably one of the hardest. I witnessed one of the smoothest where the founding pastor from back in the 60s built up and raised a church of a large congregation.

[22 : 05] And his son became on as an assistant among others. But over time, his son kind of became known as the one that was going to take over. And before that man ever died, he already installed, kind of formally installed his son in his pastor, although the son would never take it.

He'd say, nope, you're the pastor. And he just, in wisdom, stayed underneath his father until his father passed away. But he was the one doing all the preaching, all the administration. He was running the church, even saying that his dad was still the pastor.

And when he passed away, it was seamless. There was not even a hiccup. There was just very few, very, very few people that really didn't care for the style of the younger and left.

But you wouldn't even have noticed it. And so that was an incredible thing to see and to watch. It's rare, I'm sure. But whether it's smooth or whether it's not, whether you're prepared or whether you're not, change is inevitable.

And the man, whoever he is, myself included, will one day fall. And the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2 that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men.

[23 : 17] And so there's change. Look at Ecclesiastes chapter 1. I want you to see another aspect of change in the local church. First, it's the man.

Secondly, it'll be the members. And look at Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and verse number 4. The Bible says, One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh.

And just as the minister moves on, so do the members. Not one member has ever outlasted the church of the living God. And God, he saw fit just the same as he did with the man, with the members.

We go on. We pass on. And it's nothing to fear, and it's nothing to be alarmed about or to get worried about inside and built up some anxiety. It's been going on for 2,000 years.

This is allowed of God. And for a church, it's change. In time, in every church, the long-standing, the faithful pillars are one by one by one replaced.

[24 : 31] You could say, I don't like that. I don't want it too bad. It's going to happen. It's going to happen in every church. The old guard makes room for new members.

In many churches, there's charter members that form a body, and they pour their lives into this local church and work and build it up.

And they teach Sunday school, and they do the work of the ministry. And they raise their families, and they love God in that local church, and then they're gone.

And some of them end up in a nursing home because they can't physically get to church anymore. And they never make it back. And others, God calls them home.

And in all of that, there's change. And it's not always long-term stuff like these charter members live out their days. Sometimes it happens a lot quicker than that.

[25 : 29] And sometimes, I know a pastor in Colorado who's been pastoring for, I want to say, 12 years now. He started a church, and he claims that he is on his third church.

It's the same church. And what he says is, the group I'm pastoring today is not the group I started with. And in between, in these 12 years, there's been another group that has come and gone.

And it almost sounds discouraging, but he's not discouraged. He loves the Lord. He's happy to see people coming in, people saved. And the members change. And some come and some go.

Every church experiences change. It's unavoidable. Some take issue with something. Some leave. Some fall out. Some backslide. Some people just move on. Some God calls to other places and things.

And it's of the Lord. Nobody stays forever, and that's okay. God is not shocked, and we shouldn't be either. There's always going to be change in the local church, and it's evidenced not only in the man, but also by the members.

[26 : 35] Now look at chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes. And look at verse number 8.

Something Solomon says here. He says, Let me ask you a question.

Solomon's building up this choir. This doesn't appear to be what David has already established for the temple worship and the courses and that of the Levites.

It sounds like it's his own personal thing. I wonder what they were singing. Because he's got, I mean, this is the king. And in the glory of his kingdom.

So it's going to be the cream of the crop. Top notch. Audition. And you don't make it. You're gone. It's going to be the best of the best. You can get that, right? But he's bringing this group, these men and women and the musical instruments of all sorts, for probably his own personal pleasure, but what were they singing?

[27 : 47] Was it the Psalms of David? The Psalms of Asaph? Was it something else? Was it some of Solomon's own compositions? He wrote a thousand and five songs.

I wonder if any of those are on your playlist. I'm not preaching at you here. I'm asking you a question. Do you know any of this music that he would have listened to? My guess is probably not.

Oh, you have a copy of the Psalms. Yeah, I know. But do you sing them? Have you ever? The early church used to sing them. They did. But you know what's changed?

Music. Amen. It's changed. And it's changed again. And music will continue to change. And I, just relax. I know some of you are like, Oh, what's he doing?

What's he trying to bring in here? Got a screen over there. Is there going to be a ball bouncing pretty soon? Relax. No, it's not. But you know what's changed?

[28 : 49] Music. Music has changed. From what Solomon had in front of him to what you sang a few minutes ago, not even close. Music. Completely different.

It's commonly believed that the early church made use of the book of the Psalms in our Bible as their primary source for singing. Some argued, some theologians even debated and said, if you do anything singing in the church of God and it's not scripture, it's possible that it's tainted by depraved man.

And so they took this stance that the only thing holy is the scripture, therefore all music has to be. And of course, over time, other groups began to compose music based upon the scriptures.

And that was resisted early on, but it eventually prevailed. But understand what congregational singing that takes place today is not, was not even common way back in the early church.

Back then, there was even some kind of responsive thing going on, which you would be repulsed by. You'd say, this is Catholic, this is some old pagan religion stuff.

[30 : 03] Like, no. It's just the formation, the transition, the evolution of music among God's people in a local church. Take a look at the hymnal.

Get out that blue hymnal. I want to show you something. Go all the way to the back of your blue hymnal, and you'll see some page numbers in those indexes. There's a couple different indexes. And look at 494, not the hymn, but rather the index in the back, and you'll see an index of authors, composers, and sources.

If you can find that, you're in the right place. At the bottom, it'll be real small font all through these pages in the back of the book. So you've got an index of composers, of authors.

494. So look to the next page. As you look, you see the list is just one line, one after the other after the other for the most part. There's a break between the A's and the B's.

And as you begin skimming, maybe you'll see in the B's, you'll see Philip Bliss, and he's got a pretty good list of songs that he wrote there. It's, I don't know, it's five, ten, about 15 songs that he wrote.

[31 : 13] So he's got more in this hymnal than most. As you skim the next page, you'll see a bigger gap, and it's Fanny Crosby. Notice Fanny Crosby. And notice her dates of life.

Her name's Jane. 1820 to 1915. She died well over a hundred years ago. And you can see, she's got a pretty decent list of songs here. I think I wrote down, it was, yeah, 23, if I counted right.

I know, Noel, you're going to check me on that, so go ahead. But, I counted 23 hymns, and I didn't recount them, so I could be dead wrong there. But as you skim, it's most of, or just, just two or three hymns.

Flip the page over, and notice on page 497, you'll see a, you'll see the Psalms there on the bottom as a pretty big gap there, but that's not important to this.

Look above that to John Peterson. He's got the biggest gap. He has the most numbers after his name, because if I counted right in the first run through quickly, it was 44, roughly, 44, that he wrote, and it doesn't give his death, because as this book was compiled, he was still living, but he died in 2006.

[32 : 26] So he died in most of our lifetimes. John Peterson, 44 out of all these, that's a pretty good chunk. Come back to the beginning of the book and look at the very first page where you see the title page, Great Hymns of the Faith, and look who this book was compiled and edited by.

The very beginning, first page. If you have it. It should say John W. Peterson.

And I'm not making any point like, oh, he put his own, he stacked it with his stuff. That has nothing to do with it. But that man was a gifted musician who loved the Lord. And I want to say it was back in the 70s, 60s, 70s, 80s, somewhere in that, he was very used, very highly used to write over a thousand songs.

And then, what did he do? He's such a lover of music and the music of God, he compiled a hymnal. This isn't the only hymnal in the world. There's tons of these things. But this is the one that most of you from this church has, maybe some of you, all you've ever known, was Great Hymns of the Faith.

You'll notice, at least on this, I don't know if this is the only copyright, but it says copyright 1968. As far as I know, that's when this book was first produced, back in the 60s.

[33 : 56] So what did we use before that? Well, some people say, but notice that John Peterson, the one that's most prevalent in this book, is the newest of the composers.

44 of his are in here. And I've never sung Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, Speak, Lord, in the stillness, O Grant Thy Touch, O Love That Will Not Let Me Go.

There's a load of these that I've never sung and I have no idea what they are. You know what that means? That as time goes on, this book's not even going to be around. And those songs that we don't sing are just going to disappear.

And in my lifetime, there's a Christian composer that many of you know, Ron Hamilton. And Ron Hamilton has written, I don't even know how many, but if you're familiar with his name, I have a book over there that I think is called Rejoice Hymns.

He compiled his own book, much like John Peterson did back in the 60s. He did it more recently in this century or this millennium. And in that book is a load of his music.

[35 : 10] And he retained a lot of the hymns that we know and are happy with and we sing The Lily of the Valley. That's still in there, I'm sure. And there's a ton of them in that book. But a lot of these that we don't sing are out of that book.

And you know what's going to happen in another 50 and 100 and 150 and 200 years? It's going to keep going. Music's going to change. The songs that we sing today eventually are going to fall out.

And it's okay. You don't sing the songs they sang 300 years ago, 500 years ago. They weren't even written. What did they sing? It changed, didn't it?

It absolutely changed. Music changed. And it's okay. Just realize that and don't think that I'm trying to bring in some of what they call the contemporary movement into the church.

If it hasn't happened yet, it's not going to happen. Lord willing. But understand, and here's another thought. You know some of these songs in here? They don't contain the original words that the author penned.

[36 : 10] And we sing them, but they've been tweaked. A lot of them have been tweaked. And for one reason, because the doctrine was just a little off in some places. And the body of Christ said, whoa, I don't know about that.

And so they tweaked it. It was popular music of its day, but to keep it and to sing it within the house of God, they said, no, we've got to tweak that. We've got to make it right. And it was done.

And you know what's going to be done? There's certain songs that are being written today and being sung today and they're catching and they're landing in the church. And over time, some are going to say, some of us resist some of those songs.

They're like, eh, there's some stuff. But they're going to land and they're going to stick and those words are going to be tweaked. And somebody's going to put them in a hymnal and they're going to keep getting sung and it's going to go on.

And that's the way it is. The world goes on. The church goes on. Change. And that's been that way for the last 2,000 years. So don't get hung up on this as if I'm advocating for some new hymnal and new songs and bringing in something.

[37 : 12] No, I'm just making a point that there's seasons of change and there's seasons of change within the local church. And it shows up with the man, the members, the music and number four. Look at chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes.

And notice chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes, verse 16. Solomon says this, I communed with mine own heart and saying, Lo, I am come to a great estate and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem.

Yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly and perceived that this was all a vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

So the next verse, I said in mine heart, Go to now. I'll prove thee with mirth. You know what he needed? He needed a change. He went after this and just said, You know what? That's just not doing it.

Let's go this direction. I'm going to change something. And if you come down through what he decides to do in chapter 2, in verse 4, I made me great works. I built me houses. There's gardens and orchards and trees and pools of water and wood and servants and maidens and silver and gold and music.

[38 : 18] And in verse 9, So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained in me and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy.

For my heart rejoiced in all my labor and this was my portion in all my labor. Then I looked in all the works that my hands had wrought and all the labor that I had labored to do. And behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit. There was no profit under the sun.

So what did he do? Verse 12, and I turned. I turned myself to behold wisdom and madness and folly. You know what he did again? One time he said, my heart, go to now.

Go this direction. Now he's like, you know what, enough of that. I turned again. And what I want to say to you in the aspect of change is that the methods change. In Solomon's life he needed a change.

He turned from one thing to the next thing to try another thing and try another thing. And you know, it's the same thing that's true in the local church, in the seasons of change, methods of worship and methods of ministry.

[39 : 16] As the time changes, so do the methods used by the local church. You might get your guard up right here, but wait a minute, what are you trying to do? Well, relax. God has changed his methodology more than once.

And in this Bible, it says he's going to do it again. So I'm not worried about that. He changed the way you worship. Back, you better be glad too. He used to make him go to Jerusalem.

And he used to make him bring an offering or a sacrifice. There was a priesthood involved that's no longer involved. He rent that veil and put an end to some things.

The way that he's worshipped has been changed. The method there, not only the way, but the day that you worship has been changed, has it not? Back in those days, the seventh day, the Sabbath day, and yet, in the New Testament, we see them assembling and meeting on the first day of the week.

The day that Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead. The methods change. In John chapter 16, verse 7, the Lord said to his disciples, it is expedient for you that I go away.

[40 : 26] Well, why? Because change is coming. The Spirit, the Comforter's coming. And he's going to teach you all things and guide you into all truth and reveal things to come and he's going to glorify me and he's going to or show you things to come and he's going to something else about speaking or bring to remembrance the things I've said.

Why? It was expedient for Jesus Christ to leave because God's methods were changing. They were changing. Times change, people change and so do methods in local churches of ministry.

You think, if you don't like this, how about just, let's back up 400 years. Bring somebody back from the dead 400 years and plop them in this pew and they'd be shocked. They'd be shocked.

They wouldn't know where they are, what's going on, why are these people dressed like this, why do you sing that or say that or read that way or pray that way. Can you imagine, I mean, the pulpit would be built up, you'd walk up the steps and you're up here and you're broadcasting the reading, I said in mine heart, go to now and brought, and it doesn't sound like that.

They'd say, get this kid out of that pulpit. What is this? This is nothing. You know what? Things have changed and it's okay. And so the methods have changed and I could go on with that for a while but I'll just say one more thing, the ministry itself, the actual local church.

[42 : 00] I mentioned that that word ministry as a man starts a work and builds it up, it's a ministry, it's a local church. Sometimes the ministry itself changes. For Solomon, it would have been his kingdom on a throne in his kingdom understanding that he's going to be gone and leave it to others and boy, did that thing ever change, didn't it?

It surely did. Look at Revelation chapter 1 and this is, we'll end here in Revelation chapter 1.

Today we're not referring to a man's kingdom but rather to the local church itself. In Revelation 1, I want to just let you see something in verse 20, a word God uses here in John's Revelation.

Verse 20 says, The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand are the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and notice this now, the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Alright, now look at chapter number 2. The candlestick is the church in this vision. In verse number 5, he's writing to the angel of the church of Ephesus, this is a local church, and verse 5 says, Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

[43 : 43] You know, change in the ministry itself, the church, could be so much of the Lord, meaning, what I'm saying, many a church has folded up over the history of the body of Christ.

Many. Many of them cease to exist. And I'm not just saying that this is the age of apostasy, and people have been putting out that fear of like, we're all churches every so often, they'll give a statistic of how many churches are just disappearing every week, or every year, or whatever, and that's been going on for a long time.

Don't get caught up in that, because if that number was true, there would be nothing left. What God does, he puts a candlestick, a light in a place, and in time, he removes it.

It's true. You just look back through history, churches have been all over, but you know what he does at the same time? He puts a light in another place and starts it all over again somewhere else, and that grows and develops, and in time, it could get passed on, it could carry on, some of them carry on.

But how many churches do you know that have been around for more than a hundred years? How many do you know right now in America today that exist, that did exist, a hundred years ago? Is it because of the great movement of God in America?

[45 : 08] Come on. They've been dropping and they've been starting. It's been going on. It's the way of God, it's his hand throughout the course of history, not just in our land but in the world.

And he can and will remove a candlestick if he sees fit. And there's change. And it's hard to believe that, it's hard to stomach that and think that God would ever want to do that.

I myself even said it this week, it's hard to believe that God wouldn't want a local church to carry on and then I'm drawn to the scripture and see, hmm, actually, I will come unto thee quickly and remove thy candlestick except thou repent.

Okay. Maybe it is the will of God in some cases to take it out. I'm not wanting to see that. I never want to see that.

I want to read something to you, an article that I read this week and bear with me. I've trimmed it down but bear with me. The beginning of it is not really the gist of it but you'll see as we go.

[46 : 16] It says here that there's two myths about pastors that float around in church today. The first is the claim that the average tenure of a pastor in a local church is just two years when statistics from most research groups show the number to be close to four years.

Now that might not sound like much and it's not but some are 25, 30, 40 years and others are months and it all factors out to be the average of four years for a pastor.

The second myth stems from the first. People automatically assume that the relatively short tenures of many pastors are caused by a selfish mix of greed and laziness among the clergy.

Stay at one church for a couple of years, use up your sermons and illustrations, then hop over to another church in a different town and do it all over again. Or even worse, stay at a church and bide your time until a bigger and better opportunity arises, move to a higher position in another church and climb the church ladder of ministry success.

That's the second myth. Now no doubt there are lazy and greedy pastors out there and unfortunately some pastors do make ministry decisions based on these factors. At first, the statistics seem to back up the accusations.

[47 : 29] after all, if a pastor stays only a few years at a local church, we assume there must be some deficiency in the pastor's character. I've even heard of seminary professors, many of whom have never pastored a church in their life, dump on pastors for changing churches every few years and thus the myth of church-hopping pastor begins.

But there's another side of the phenomenon. The statistics regarding ministerial tenure may be correct, but could our interpretation of these numbers be inadequate?

Very few people take into account the church situations that many of these pastors go into. Many ministers begin in small churches. Many of the churches are run by prominent families or a deacon board with a strong community and family tie.

Often these churches don't want to be pastored. They want somebody to preach and to just show up and perform ministerial rites. They don't want to be challenged or led into deeper Christianity.

A pastor who preaches a gospel that confronts complacency, apathy, and other sins may find he is not welcomed in that church. A minister might wind up in two or three of these types of churches within a ten-year period.

[48 : 43] So the picture is not so much of a pastor who greedily hops from church to church, but of a man of God who wants to do God's work being chased out of churches.

That have no interest in serious ministry. Think about it. Most young pastors have school-aged children. What man wants to uproot his family several times over a short period of time just so that he won't have to come up with fresh material?

Most of the pastors I've talked to yearn for solid, lifelong ministries in one community of faith. But sadly, many churches do not want to be truly pastored.

Well, well, well. So there could be that there's multiple factors in the demise of a local church. Now I'm going to conclude here and be done.

Bible Baptist Church, I mentioned earlier, this church has seen its share of change over the last four years. But understand this, change is okay. And you can't stop change.

[49 : 50] And God, in some cases, he's absolutely the author of it. And so what can we do? Well, we can understand one thing that as long as we keep our eyes and our hearts on the Lord Jesus Christ and on this Holy King James Bible, as long as we do those things, we're doing our part.

And then we'll trust God to do his. And that's all we can do. And we want to have that prayer, Lord, thy will be done. Lord, whatsoever seemeth good unto thee.

That's what we want. But we don't want to be guilty. We don't want to be the reason in Revelation 2 that the candlestick is snuffed out. So let's stay faithful.

Let's buckle down. Let's accept change as it comes and see it as of the Lord and keep our hearts and minds and love in the Lord Jesus Christ and his book.

You'll be fine. We'll be fine. We'll be fine. Change is a part of life, right? You're not going to get away with it. And one day there'll be somebody else if the Lord Terry's standing in this pulpit.

[50 : 58] Rich and I were talking in my office the other day and he said to me, he's like, I don't think you're going to drop dead anytime soon. And I thought, I don't think I am either. But you never know.

You never know. And so change will come. And there's faces in this crowd right now that won't be here in a year or two. And it's not anybody I'm pointing out or want to see go.

That's not even the way I'm thinking. I'm just saying as a matter of fact, change happens. But Lord willing, there'll also be faces that'll be in here new. Maybe it won't be anybody that's not here, but there'll be faces that are here. There'll be change.

It could be the man, the members, the whole thing I gave you. So don't fight it. Don't resist it. Receive it of the Lord and accept it. But keep your heart right in the whole thing. Don't get stirred up and worried and just know what's going to happen and be part of the problem.

But stay faithful and stay grounded and be part of the solution. All right. We're going to pray here. I'm not going to have an invitation after that. I'm just going to let that simmer and let it take what you can from it.

[52 : 07] And I'll pray here. We'll be dismissed. And then after that, I'd like Brother Eric, he has some places kind of picked out for us to get out there. I'd appreciate if the men would rally around and get a partner and we can just go out and knock out what we have to do here.

And then we'll come back and have a meal. And I think the half an hour time is kind of a decent gauge, but I could be stretching that. So just we'll play it by ear. But let's be dismissed first with a word of prayer.

Father, we are... Thank you.