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Agents of Change?

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

“Change” is the hot buzzword of our time. Everywhere we turn people are offering it, pushing it, and promising it. We see “change agents” transforming the world around us in politics, government, churches, and lifestyles. Everywhere we look, people are telling us we need change to be a better person, more fulfilled, more acceptable, more lovable, more desirable. The pressure to allow, support, or seek change often comes from judgment or fear of some sort of punishment. Is the Believer under judgment or punishment? Not from God, for we have been changed by Christ into God’s children, no longer coming “into judgment” (John 5:24), “so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:17b-19).

But the judgment of God “rightly falls” (Romans 2:2) on unbelievers because they “loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19b). The unbeliever senses he’s under God’s judgment, because of his sin, which makes him feel lacking, inadequate, and in need of something to make him “acceptable.” God intends this to lead sinners to repentance. But the devil and his world twists this motivation to lead people astray by offering more “palatable” alternatives to repentance that will “change” them without requiring accountability to God. Millions of people take Satan’s “change,” because it is “a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

In the same way, the devil tries to make Believers feel judgment from God and in need of change—and that it is our responsibility to make ourselves better. Then he offers remedy: “Just read this book, follow these steps, follow this teacher, do this, do that.” His promise is that you’ll be a better YOU, more in line with how you should be living, a more “righteous” person, closer to God, your life will be easier, etc. And if it isn’t working for you, “well, you didn’t do it right,” or “maybe that program just isn’t for you, so here’s another one that will fit you.” We think we’re getting closer to what God wants us to be, all the while wandering away from His green pastures like sheep—the grass always seems “greener” elsewhere, but in truth, there is no place better than where God wants us to be, regardless of whether we like it. The focus of our lives is not on us and what we can do, but on God and what He has done. “Do not associate with those who are given to change” (Proverbs 24:21), who doubt God and are unstable in all their ways (James 1:6-7), for just as Jesus does not change, but waits on His Father’s will, we are to imitate Him “as beloved children” (Ephesians 5:1).

May we trust God and wait on His sanctifying change in our lives through the working of His Holy Spirit, “who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:14). This is God’s work, not ours, and calls for our obedience, endurance, and discipline as His children. Remember Abraham: “having patiently waited, he obtained the promise” (Hebrews 6:15), so also our attitude should be that “all the days of my struggle I will wait until my change comes” (Job 14:14b). God is working His change in His children, to be completed at the appearing of His Son (Titus 2:13), when “we will all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51b). Amen.

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