

Walking With God Through the Changes of Life

Reflecting with you for a few moments on the subject of change. I want to tie it to what the Bible says and to some hymn texts that have helped me and have stayed with me over the years and have given me perspective on change.

NORMAL CHANGES

Life for all of us involves a series of stages. It's normal and natural. We go through times of transition: from childhood to adolescence, to adulthood. From being a boy (a son) to being an adult, and for many of us, a father, a grandfather and beyond.

Changes will come as we age and grow. They will come whether we like it or not, whether those changes are welcome or unwelcome.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is helpful in looking at life through this lens.

“There is a time for everything” (Ecc. 3:1ff)

“God has made everything beautiful (appropriate) in its time.” (3:11)

“Enjoy life with the wife of your youth.” (9:9)

“Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.” (12:1ff)

The writer of the Book of Lamentations also helps us with this.

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, therefore I will hope in Him.” (Lam. 3:22-24)

My favourite hymn for many years has been based on these verses:

Great is Thy Faithfulness

“Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.”

“You give and take away. My heart will choose to say, ‘Blessed be Your name’”

CHANGES IN DIRECTION

Life is like a journey. It has a beginning and ending, a starting point and a destination. And like any route you take, it has twists and turns.

An old gospel song says, “Life Is Like a Mountain Railroad”

Life is like a mountain railroad with an engineer that's brave.

We must make the run successful from the cradle to the grave.

Watch the curves, the fills the tunnels, never falter, never fail.

Keep your hand upon the throttle and your eye upon the rail.

We all come to points in life where we face a change in direction, where we hit a curve in the road, where a things take a turn.

It is at those times when we need clear direction from the One who knows all things and who can see the road ahead, like we cannot.

It's at those times when we need guidance and direction.

"Thus says the Lord, 'Stand at the crossroads and look and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way it, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'"

(Jer. 6:16)

"(The Lord) will be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as He hears it, He answers you. Your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher and your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.' When you turn to the right or when you turn to the left."

(Isa. 30:19-21)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."

(Prov. 3:5-6)

When you come to times of decision-making in your life, when you know that changes are ahead, but you're not sure where those changes will take you, and what direction you should take . . . ASK . . . LISTEN . . . TRUST. God will guide you.

In the words of that wonderful old Fanny Crosby hymn,

*All the way my Savior leads me, what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy, who through life has been my Guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort, here by faith in Him to dwell.
For I know what e'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.*

CHANGES DUE TO CRISIS

There are changes that come, sometimes suddenly, sometimes violently, in our lives that are both unexpected and unwelcomed. Times of crisis bring times of change, often life-altering change.

The word for "crisis" in the written Chinese language involves two characters, one is "danger" and the other is what we might call "change-point." The danger is the threat it poses to life and health, the other to the inevitable change it brings.

Life for most of us will involve times of pain, loss, and grief. And with those unwelcome intrusions, come change.

In some of the darkest days of my life, the character of God and the promises of God sustained me through difficult times of change and loss.

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

(Isa. 43:1-3)

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff they comfort me.

(Psalm 23:4)

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.” “Be still and know that I am God.” (Ps. 46:1-3, 10)

The moving hymn, Be Still My Soul, says it so well:

*Be still, my soul; the Lord is on thy side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change He faithful will remain
Be still, my soul, thy best, thy heavenly Friend,
Thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

Many of us can look back over the course of our lives and trace the hand of God through all the changes we have experienced, and we can testify that God was faithful to walk with us in the midst of our trials and turns.

As the second verse of that hymn says,

*Be still, my soul, thy God doth undertake
to guide the future as He has the past
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake,
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.*

We can be sure that God will walk with us through the changes that are yet to come.

My challenge to you is to hold fast to the faithfulness of God. Trust in His character and the assurance of His unfailing love. Seek Him for direction for your life. Ask, listen, Trust. Hold fast to Him through every season, every change. He will keep you strong and stable until the end.

I close with the words of an old gospel song that holds a great deal of wisdom for all of us:

*Time is filled with swift transitions;
naught of earth unmoved can stand;
Build your hopes on things eternal;
Hold to God's unchanging hand.
Hold to God's unchanging hand;
Hold to God's unchanging hand;
Build your hopes on things eternal;
Hold to God's unchanging hand.*