



### **Day thirty-two**

For the next 40 days we are offering us all a challenge to consider 40 things that are sucking the life out of us. The challenge is to examine these and through confronting God's word, his Spirit, and his community of faith as we seek to be filled with his life and his love again. At the conclusion of each challenge there will be an opportunity to engage about this with another person and/or the larger community.

Today the thing we are asking us to explore giving up is:

## **resistance to change.**

### **Confronting the text**

*But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

*'I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire,' (Matt. 3:7-12).*

### **Confronting my self with God**

The old joke asks . . . "What is the inscription written on the tombstone of the Church?"

The answer? "We've never done it that way."

On one level the idea of resistance to change owes some of its impetus to repentance.

We are "going" a particular "direction" and God calls us his way. Our turning is expressed theologically as repentance.

The person of God who listens to the Spirit of God should find themselves turning from their way to God's way.

But what is God's way?

Ah, there's the rub.

There are two errors that we can fall into regarding knowing God's will.

The first is thinking that we *can't* know God's will.

This is silly and flies in the face of the teaching of the Bible. Not everything in the Bible is for all of us, (see the Rich Young Ruler – Mk, 10) but some of it is for all of us.

Me thinks we vacillate on being convicted too easily.

The second error is thinking that just because God is speaking to me that he is also speaking that same thing to everyone. Of course, the worst example of this is when people hold someone to a standard which they themselves avoid, but there are plenty of folks out there who are willing to hold up both ends of the bargain.

The trouble with those folks is they are not acting in love, (see 1 Cor. 13) and their enthusiasm for change dampens the change that others might embrace.

One of the most brilliant Bible teachers I've had the privilege of sitting under is Dale Brunner. In his commentary on the book of Matthew, called *The Christbook*, he reflects on these sorts of people . . .

"In Matthew, the message of God's law comes especially to those who want to live by it . . . In Jesus' time these people were the Pharisees and the Sadducees; in our time it is we ourselves who are Bible believers and who seek to live under Holy Scripture. The message of the law must be heard by those of us who claim God's Word. John's (the Baptist) message now tells us that that the major

problem of the church is—the church. As we see later in the teaching of Jesus, too, the chief problems of the people of God were not the Roman occupation nor other external (political, economic, or social) threats. The chief problems of the people of God were (and always are) the most visible representatives of the people of God: religious leadership. The leaders in Jesus' time consisted of mainly two groups. First, there was a lay group of the Serious (as we might call them) —the Separatists or “Pharisees”; and second, there were the leading clergy—the sophisticated Sadducees. These two groups were, respectively, (as we might call them today), the Laymen United for a Biblical Confession and their usually bitter enemies, the Clergy United for Relevant Ministry—each group believing itself the major locus of God's saving will in the people of God. These two serious groups are, John now warns us, God's major opponents at his Visit, (The Christbook page 90 and 91).

When I was at a pastor's conference a few years ago where Dale was the Bible study leader one of our group asked him his opinion on the church's struggle with the ordination of practicing homosexuals. He thought for a moment and then answered . . . “Someone smarter than me is going to have to make that decision. But I will tell you this: this issue is one of those where the church takes a great risk in becoming the Serious. And I would be careful of that.”

### **Listening to God's people**

What am I the most resistant to changing?

What does scripture say about that area of life?

Am I sure?