

The Changeless Christ

by Russell DeLong

The sermon emphasizes Jesus Christ as the unchanging foundation amidst the constant changes and uncertainties of life.

Topics: "Eternal Security", "Jesus Christ"

Description

Russell DeLong emphasizes the unchanging nature of Jesus Christ amidst a world of constant change and instability. He highlights the futility of relying on money, power, position, education, or friends, which are transient and unreliable in times of trouble. DeLong stresses that Jesus Christ is the only dependable and eternal Rock, offering forgiveness for sins and inner cleansing. He urges listeners to find security and certainty in Jesus, the unshakable foundation in a tumultuous world.

Transcript

Scripture Reading -- II Samuel 22: 1-3, Psalms 18:2, Psalms 89: 26, Psalms 95: 1, Psalms 61: 2, and I Corinthians 10:4.

Text -- Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Hebrews 13: 8).

Man is living in a world of change. The problem of stability versus change, the permanent versus the transient, the abiding versus the passing has characterized man's search in the field of religion, politics, ethics, finance, business, medicine, law, education, in fact, in every field where man is engaged.

In the realm of finance the problem is how to stabilize the dollar or pound or whatever the measuring stick. How can it be kept from constant fluctuation?

In business the task is to execute rapid merchandise turnovers and meet changing demands.

In medicine constant change is noticed. How much of the new may be accepted and how

much of the old may be retained? The recent marvelous discoveries of penicillin and the sulfa drugs make many old treatments obsolete.

Law changes so rapidly with new statutes replacing old.

The field of religion is not free from this continual process of change. It is a perpetual task to determine what part of the new is true and how much of the old is sure.

The domain of ethics, if there is such, is a constant battleground. What is right? What is the yardstick of conduct? The prevalent tendency is toward relativism. No authority is accepted, therefore, each individual is a law unto himself -- there is no final tribunal. This is a recrudescence of Sophism.

The Roman Catholics have relied on the stability and the authority of the Church.

Protestants formerly accepted the Bible as the final word on conduct. When you discard the Church and renounce the Bible there is nothing left but the reason of each individual. Your idea of right becomes as good as mine. This leads to pure relativism making impossible any sure, certain course of reliable, collective ethics.

What is it you rely on? Upon what do you lean in times of stress and strain?

When the sun is shining and the birds are singing, life is easy, buoyant, and exhilarating. In such times man is inclined to be boastful, bombastic, and flout his independence. He struts, throws his head back and his chest out and is the self-appointed lord of all creation. He flaunts his independence. He is the head man and recognizes no dependence on either God or man. Such hours are dangerous, for a person can take attitudes, make statements, and commit acts which may take a lifetime to rectify.

I agree with Schleiermacher that normally and naturally man is a dependent creature; being of a social nature he must have companionship. The sense of "aloneness" is unbearable, in fact, it is the most pungent form of personal pain.

No stronger statement of eternal punishment is pictured than when Jesus referred to

"castaways." "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." Unwanted, unfit, undesirable, disqualified for social communion, repulsive to God, repugnant to man, alone in the universe. No more tragic picture can be painted than that of a poor finite soul having flaunted his independence of God and snobbishly to have severed his need of man to find himself alone, unrelated, unsupported, and unloved. Just a metaphysical existent -- an empty entity -- devoid of love, without a sense of gratitude, a traitor to duty, a renegade from truth, a disloyal soul, loose in the universe, a castaway, thrown away from God, flung away from man, unworthy of an eternal home.

What a pathetic, tragic picture! Such is the final end of a disloyal, ungrateful soul. Keep

going the direction you are and ultimately you will become disconnected from anyone good and from anything worth while. Be independent and cocky and you will gradually ungear yourself and have what you think you want, a perfect independence and complete autonomy with no obligations to anything or anybody and without a duty to any person, ideal or thing. But when that state of complete aloneness is accomplished remember you merit no further expression of gratitude, love, or devotion from others. You can achieve your independent rights and sacrifice your normal privileges. Rights are guaranteed only by the performance of duties.

The highest values of association, fellowship, mutual affection, love, and communion are

possible only as one meticulously performs his duties to others and thus merits their regard for his rights.

To go it alone in life soon becomes boring and very dangerous. One gets on fairly well

when the sun shines, but when the clouds begin to gather and the storm breaks, the lightnings flash and the thunders roar -- what then? When the lights all go out and you are in darkness, where is your spirit of boastful independence?. Upon what can you rely then?

Some people pile up a reserve of money for the so-called "rainy day." But money is a poor comforter for a sorrowing heart. It may buy things but it cannot purchase spiritual peace or mental rest. Money cannot turn the lights on again. But suppose financial loss comes, and your monetary reserve crashes to bits? Money is fleeting -- its value changes -- it vanishes like all things material.

Other people put their reliance on position. They reach the top in their business or

profession and rest on the power of office. This is quite satisfying as long as one is on top but when political storms come and you are swept off -- what then?

Education is the desired end of many. Build up a reserve of knowledge and when the hour of stress comes you will be secure. But is it not a fact that education is merely instrumental, a means and not an end? Is it not true that educated persons are as discontent and miserable, if not more so, than others? Something more than education is needed for happiness.

Friends -- good friends are thought to be the guarantee of help in the hour of personal need. Yes, a good friend is an invaluable asset. We make very few genuine friends in a lifetime. When one is on the top and prospering he has legions of apparent friends. But when adversity comes and prosperity disappears, where are your friends? In most instances they are elsewhere worshipping at the shrine of other prosperous persons.

Money, position, power, education, and friends are not sure and certain in the hour of storm.

Is there anything stable in the world? Can anything be relied upon? Is everything transient, temporary, passing? Is all flux and change? Is all purely relative to time, place, and condition? If I cannot depend on money, position, power, education, or friends, what can I be sure will stand and abide?

There is only one answer -- Jesus Christ. He is the Rock, the unshakable, immovable

Gibraltar. He is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever.

No earthquake can dislodge Him. No storm can overwhelm His height and no typhoon can upset His depth. No wind can cause Him to topple and fall. He stands -- as the only dependable, reliable thing in the universe. Everything centers about Him and gets its points of direction from Him. He is the pole star; He is the compass; He is the chart; He is the Way. You can get your position from Him and be right

Jesus is the Rock. He is ageless, timeless, unchanging, and eternal. When friends forsake,

He remains faithful. When money becomes valueless, He remains priceless. When men fall from power and influence, He remains all-powerful and omnipresent. When education fails, He remains the Truth. When friends prove faithless, He stands faithful. When all is dark He is the great Beacon Light. When you find yourself on shifting sand, He is the Rock of Salvation.

He is the Rock of Ages, the only sure, abiding, stable point of sure reference in all the

universe.

During the summer of 1941, just before the war, Mrs. DeLong and I visited Mexico City as delegates to the International Congress of Religious Education. It was a glorious experience. Enroute we stopped at Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. In my opinion this is one of the greatest natural phenomena in America, if not in the entire world. Accompanied by five hundred others we followed the official guide to a depth 850 feet beneath the surface of the earth. We walked single file from one great room to another, squeezing through small openings in the rocks, observing the beautiful formations and gorgeous coloring of the stalactites and stalagmites.

After lunch we took the trip through the great room sometimes called the "big room" or the "King's chamber." It is a mile and a half long, 450 feet across and 320 feet to the ceiling and no one knows how deep. We encircled this room, walking perhaps four miles. At the end of the trip we approached what is called the "Rock of Ages," a massive formation of rock extending upward many feet and protruding forward. The guide requested all to be seated on the sloping incline of that great spectacle. He then informed us that in a few minutes all the lights would be extinguished and requested that all cigarettes and flashlights be put out and that silence reign, calling attention to the fact that for the first time many of us would be in stark darkness.

Soon the lights were turned off and we were in darkness and silence. I felt creepy and very uncomfortable. There we were sitting 850 feet beneath the surface of the earth. If the earth should quake only God would know where we were. After about ten seconds of such stark darkness I felt like saying to the guide, "We have seen it and felt it, please put on the lights." But another ten seconds passed and the uneasiness increased and finally when thirty seconds had elapsed - it seemed like an hour. Then away down at the end of the cavern -- more than a mile and a half away a little speck of light appeared. At the same time a male quartet from that distance began to sing softly, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in Thee." The light grew larger and larger until it illuminated every corner and crevice of that cavern. As the light increased in intensity the singing grew in volume and as that blazing light filled the room, the quartet struck the last verse

with tremendous vocal power:

While I draw this fleeting breath,

When my eyes shall close in death;

When I rise to worlds unknown,

And behold Thee on Thy throne,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.

Well -- something happened to me. It seemed that a new room in my soul had opened.

Something within me was stirred. I felt like shouting and praising God for the one sure, steadfast thing in all the world -- the Rock of Ages.

As I sat there in that darkness I remembered that away back 1,900 years ago, the world was shrouded in spiritual, stark darkness, when one night, a speck of light appeared in Bethlehem's manger and down over the centuries it has grown in intensity and clarity until it has penetrated and cast its glorious rays to the farthest corners of a sin-darkened world.

In these days of uncertainty and change, turmoil and tumult, thank God there is a rock upon which we can place our feet with certainty and security.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee;

Let the water and the blood,

From Thy wounded side which flowed,

Be of sin the double cure

Save from wrath and make' me pure.

Jesus can forgive your sins -- your outward transgressions. He can also cleanse your soul.

His is the double cure. He forgives the outward acts and cleanses the inward nature. Good works will not save you; tears have no cleansing power. It is only Christ that can save and purify. Money, worldly position avail nothing. You must come as a man, as a sinner.

Could my tears forever flow,

Could my zeal no languor know;

These for sin could not atone,

Thou must save, and Thou alone;

In my hand no price I bring,

Simply to Thy cross I cling.

Prayer

Let us pray: O God, for that soul that is unsettled and troubled we pray. For that one in

sorrow and darkness we seek Thy help. For those souls bound by sin we entreat Thee to break such fetters. For those who have relied on money, power, position, education, and friends and have found them unstable and unreliable, help them to cast themselves on Thee, the Rock of Ages.

Amen.

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