

PERILOUS TIMES

By Keith Greer

Times are forever changing. Nothing remains the same I've been told. Some have even hinted that change is good. What about in religion? Among brethren? Is change inevitable?

No one can deny that things are changing. This world is difficult to keep up with. My computer makes many aspects of my job easier. Yet, what I use today will be "outdated" tomorrow. Change can make your life much more enjoyable in many ways. Sadly, some change is not for the better.

A few years back a good friend of mine lost his preaching job of over ten years. Why? His preaching and teaching were too pointed and negative. Some members where I have labored in the past left over the very same reason. Were we guilty of teaching error? No! Did we preach the whole counsel of God? Yes! Guess maybe we taught too much of it!

Why do we preachers teach lessons so "pointed and negative"? Let me give you some reasons why I do.

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." {2 Timothy 2:2-5}

"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." {Acts 20:26,27}

"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." {Galatians 1:10}

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." {2 Peter 2:1-3}

God commands me to do so! Every gospel preacher will give an account of his preaching. What he said and what he left unsaid. Please read Ezekiel 33:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Why do brethren get upset with preachers? This question has been perplexing preachers and me for years. Yet, with the help of God, I believe I'm beginning to understand. I'll let you be the judge of my conclusions.

When Stephen preached to those Jews in Acts 7, why did they want to kill him? When Paul preached to the people of Lystra and Derbe, Acts 14, they dragged him out of the city to stone him. Why? Paul was cast into prisons many times for his preaching of Christ. Why? What did these men, and many others we could mention, do to deserve this type of treatment?

Preached truth! Preaching truth will convict people of their sins, John 16:8-10. Brethren do not want to hear about their true condition before God. So what do they do? Fire the preacher. Only one problem--that doesn't change their condition!

Finally, from a personal perspective, I can tell you preaching the gospel is a serious and stressful work—if one truly loves the souls of men and his brethren. No, we are not perfect in our judgments and we don't always have the right tone. Just remember this one point—one who truly loves your soul and wants you to go to heaven must preach all the truth in power and simplicity. Enough said!
