

Who Changed Things?

Who changed things from the vibrant, Spirit-empowered “by life or by death” faith of the New Testament to today’s spineless home-and-garden Sunday-morning **religion**?

Who changed things from “Leave everything and follow Me” (see Luke 14:33) to “**Pray** this little prayer and you’re set for eternity”?

Who changed things from “All who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (see 2 Tim. 3:12) to “Ask Jesus into your heart and enjoy a comfortable life”?

Who changed things from a fearless proclamation of the truth, whatever the cost or consequences, to a watered down, compromised message that is afraid to offend anyone?

By what authority, by whose decree, based on what new revelation have we so blatantly departed from the faith of the apostles? Who changed things?

Who changed things from the New Testament faith, where even the disciples couldn’t minister without the Spirit’s enduement, to today’s version, where whole ministries are run with hardly any evidence of the Spirit’s work?

As A.W. Tozer once said, “If the **Holy Spirit** was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.”

This remains true of most of the contemporary church in the West.

Who changed things from a God-centered faith to a man-centered faith, from “Take up your cross and deny yourself” to “Bypass

the cross and empower yourself”?

Who changed things from holiness being beautiful to holiness being bondage, from the early church being known for its high standards to the contemporary church being known for its scandals?

Who changed things from the people of God being a threat to the powers of darkness to the people of God being active participants in darkness?

In the early church, Paul instructed the Corinthians to separate themselves from people who claimed to be believers but were living in outward, unrepentant sin (1 Corinthians 5). Today, some of those people lead our churches and preach from our pulpits. Who changed things?

Who changed things from a faith that was so focused on the life of Jesus and so infused with the reality of His death and resurrection that no sacrifice was considered too great and no act of service considered too extreme—to the contrary, suffering for Him was considered a privilege (Matt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; Phil. 1:29)—to today’s convenience-store Christianity, where we have to “sell” salvation to the sinner by spicing up the deal with perks and benefits?

When did Jesus stop being enough?

When did obedience become an option?

When did keeping God’s commandments out of love for Him become “religious” (in the negative sense of the word)? Didn’t Jesus say that if we loved Him, we would keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21)?

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If we belonged to another religion that claimed to have other books that supplemented the Bible or traditions that superseded it, that would be one thing.

But we don't. We believe the Scriptures alone are God's Word and that nothing that comes after the Scriptures—no tradition, no alleged revelation, no consensus—can undermine or countermand the written Word of God.

So, who changed things from the biblical version of the Jesus faith to the modern American version?

We can debate church history and blame this group or that group, and we can point out what's wrong with this denomination and that denomination. We might even have some great historical and contemporary insights.

But unless we get back to believing what is written and acting on what is written, we will continue to perpetuate our merry-go-round Christianity with lots of noise and action and bells and whistles but with little authority, little purity and little effect (if any).

I didn't get the memo that God's Word and Spirit were not enough, and I'm far more concerned with what He says than with what the latest polls say.

Really, now, since when did the Lord command us to fashion our preaching and our style of worship and even the way we look based on what's trending?

If some church leaders choose to trust in worldly business models and carnal consulting firms, that's their choice. I say that we go with the power of the name of Jesus and the wisdom of the Word of God and the fullness of the Spirit. I say that we go with the New Testament model, applied with boldness and with compassion to the needs of the day.

Years ago, Leonard Ravenhill said, "One of these days some simple soul will pick up the Book of God, read it, and believe it. Then the rest of us will be embarrassed."

I want to be that simple soul. How about you?

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