

# THE UNCHANGING WORD

by Jefferson David Tant

In one of the conversations our Lord was having with his disciples, he stated: *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away”* (**Matt. 24:35**). And the apostle Peter wrote: *“For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls: But the word of the Lord abides forever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you”* (**I Peter 1:24-25**).

God’s Word was committed to written form by Moses well over 3,000 years ago. It has endured through the ages in spite of the efforts of man to destroy it, or at least to keep it out of the hands of the common man. Some 2,600 years ago, in **Jeremiah 36**, King Jehoiakim ordered God’s word written on a scroll to be burned, as he did not like its message. Then we have these words in verse **32**: *“Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the son of Neraiah, the scribe, and he wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.”*

The Roman emperor Diocletian, in 303 A.D. ordered that all copies of the scriptures were to be burned. He died, but the Bible still lives. In the Dark Ages the Roman Catholic Church forbade the common people to have the Bible accessible to them. I have seen images of a Bible with a hole in the cover that allowed it to be chained to the pulpit so that no common man could take it and read it for himself. The Church did not want men to read for themselves and see the differences between what the church practiced and what the Bible taught. William Tyndale was burned at the stake October 6, 1536 for having the audacity to translate and print the Bible in English so the common man could read it for himself.

The French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) is said to have declared that within 100 years he would make the Bible a museum piece. But a half century later, he was dead, and the Bible lives on. My suspicion is that God is far more powerful than any king, church official or atheist. The Bible does reside in museums, as well as in billions of homes, office and church buildings, etc.

Which all brings me to my point. The Bible is the Living Word of the Living God. It is not up to man to change it, add to it, or take away from it. We really only have two choices—to believe it or reject it. There is no middle ground, i.e., to take part of it and reject other parts that do not suit our particular whims. The modern thinking in many denominations is that we don’t need to take the Bible literally. After all, it was written thousands of years ago, and times have changed. Therefore we need to “keep up with the times.” Some modern religious leaders propose that the Bible is just a narrative, a story. It doesn’t have commands or obligations for us to follow, if I understand what they has written.

One problem with such thinking is that *God doesn’t change, nor does his Word*. The nature of man, the nature of sin, and the nature of Satan has not changed. Satan’s *approach* may change with the times. For example, he may appeal to the lust of the flesh through internet pornography which was not available 100 years ago, but the lust of the flesh is still a sin (**I John 2:16**).

Where did we get the right to sit in judgment on God’s words? I have heard people say, “Well, I see what the Bible says, but I don’t believe it.” Or they may say, “But times have changed.” Some have even gone so far as to claim a certain teaching is not in their Bible. My father related

an incident when he was preaching in Denver many years ago. He was having a discussion with a woman on the matter of the necessity of baptism, and quoted **Mark 16:16**: “*He that believes and is baptized shall be saved...*” (**Mark 16:16a**). She said, “That’s not in my Bible.” My father insisted that it was, and she just as strongly insisted that it was not. My father then asked to see her Bible, and upon receiving it turned to the passage. Sure enough, it was *not* in her Bible! She had taken scissors and *cut it out!* Problem solved! Or so she thought.

Another incident occurred over the same passage, as a visitor to the services where my father was preaching made a comment after the service that she “didn’t see it that way,” referring to my father’s mention of **Mark 16:16**. My father took out his Bible, turned to the passage and read it without any comment. She replied, “I don’t see it that way.” What way? The way it read. She understood exactly what the passage said. My father did not give his “interpretation.” He just read the verse. Her problem was not that she didn’t “see” it. She knew exactly what it said. Her problem was that she didn’t want to believe it. But rather than bluntly saying she didn’t believe the Bible, she put a more acceptable “spin” on the matter by saying she didn’t “see” it that way. Which way? “*That*” way, which indicated that she perfectly well understood what the verse said.

I had a similar experience in a discussion with a denominational preacher that lived across the street from me in Portales, New Mexico. I had asked him if he believed salvation was by “faith only.” He said he did. Then I turned to **James 2:24** and asked him to read it. “*You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*” He closed the Bible, handed it back to me and said, “That’s not the kind of God I serve.” End of discussion. He admitted he did not know that verse was in the Bible, but its presence made no difference. His mind had already been made up. In his mind, he had taken that teaching out of the Bible.

Consider some clear statements God has give us in regard to this matter. “*You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you*” (**Deut. 4:2**). “*Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it*” (**Deut. 12:32**).

“*Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go*” (**Joshua 1:7**). “*Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar*” (**Prov. 30:6**).

**Revelation 22:18-19**: “*I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.*”

Balaam understood his obligation to respect God’s word very well. When he was encouraged by Balak to come and curse Israel, “*Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, ‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of the LORD my God’*” (**Num. 22:18**).

Dear Reader, God’s Word is truth, and truth does not change. Opinions change, theories change, ideas change, man’s doctrines change, but God does not change, and truth does not change. Through the prophet Malachi God stated, “*For I, the LORD, do not change...*” (**Mal. 3:6**).

As Christ's crucifixion drew near, he was praying to his father, and in the prayer made a petition for his disciples: "*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth*" (**John 17:17**). And it is by this word that we will be judged at the last day. "*He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day*" (**John 12:48**)

If I were in medical school studying to become a doctor, there would come a time for the final exam before being accredited as a doctor. I would be examined over what I had learned from the textbooks and through my observations. Now, suppose that I was asked about a certain medical procedure that was explained in my textbook. But I didn't like what the textbook said, and wrote on the exam paper, "I don't believe what the textbook said. I have my own ideas."

Do you think I would "pass" the exam and be certified as a doctor? You know the answer. Why does anyone think that he will pass the Great Final Exam when he answers "I didn't like that particular commandment, so changed it to suit my preferences."?

In one of Christ's parables, he told of a master who returned unexpectedly, and found a certain servant unprepared. "*And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes...*" (**Luke 12:47**). Notice that phrase "or act in accord with his will." Evidently that servant did not believe everything his master told him, or decided he didn't have to follow everything his master told him.

Consider Jesus' words in **Matthew 7:21-23**: "*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'*"

What is the "lawlessness" Christ mentioned? Here are people who are sincerely doing good works, but Jesus said they would not be accepted. So obviously it takes more than just sincerity to be found in God's favor. The "lawlessness" term simply refers to that which is without authority. They were doing things which had not been authorized by God. What may be good in man's thinking may not be good in God's thinking. That's why we need to respect the admonition given in **Colossians 3:17a**: "*Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...*" Our teaching (words) and our deeds (actions) are to be done "in the name of the Lord"—*by his authority*, according to his will.

If my children want to inherit my estate, they must comply with the terms in my will. Everyone understands that. They are not free to pick and choose which conditions they agree with. Our Lord makes the same comparison concerning his Father's will—the New Testament. Oh, there are many people who have some ideas that seem good to them, but they are not things that are a part of the Father's will.

Men through the centuries have added their own ideas of what would seem to be good doctrines and good practices, etc., but our Lord says they will not be accepted. "*But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men*" (**Matt. 15:9**).

These doctrines, creeds, disciplines, catechisms, etc., that men have devised as laws for their churches change from time to time. As examples, note the following.

1. *'No divorce, except for adultery, shall be regarded by the church as lawful; and no Minister shall solemnize marriage in any case where there is a divorced wife or husband living; but this rule shall not be applied to the innocent party to a divorce for the cause of adultery...'*

2. *"In view of the seriousness with which the Scriptures and the Church regard divorce, pastors may solemnize the marriage of a divorced person only when they are satisfied by careful counseling, that (1) the divorced person is sufficiently aware of the factors leading to the failure of the previous marriage, (2) the divorced person is sincerely preparing to make the proposed marriage truly Christian, and (3) sufficient time has elapsed between the divorce and the contemplated marriage for adequate preparation and counseling."*

Did you note a little difference? Both are quotes from the Methodist Discipline. The difference is that the first quotation is from the 1904 edition, and the second is from the 1972 edition. Neither edition is the true standard for determining faith or practice – only God's word can do that - but at least the 1904 edition far more closely represents what God's Word says in **Matthew 19:9**: *"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."* The 1904 edition forbids a minister to perform a wedding ceremony for a person who is divorced, unless the divorce was for adultery. The 1972 edition rubs out that ruling, and says that under certain conditions the minister can ignore both the Discipline and the Bible.

The Discipline is titled "The Constitution of the Methodist Church" on page 9 of the edition I have. I would rather consider the Bible to be the constitution of the church than a man-made creed that changes from time to time. God's law has not changed, but the church's law has changed. This is typical of virtually every denomination that exists, as their laws change over time to reflect the changes in society, but God's word is not determined by a majority vote! Catholic doctrine has changed, Mormon doctrine has changed, Episcopal doctrine has changed, Baptist doctrine has changed...well, you get the point. Would it not be better to be a part of a church that accepts *only God's Word* as its constitution, its creed, and its rule of practice? Such churches do exist.

For emphasis, let me repeat the earlier citation of **Matthew 15:9**: *"But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."* It would do us well to give heed to that clear teaching from Jesus Christ.

With respect to inspiration, i.e. the revelation of the mind of God to man, the apostle Paul writes: *"For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ"* (**I Cor. 2:11-16**).

The point is very clear in the foregoing passage. The Holy Spirit has revealed the mind of God. This is God's wisdom, not man's. But some evidently think their wisdom is better than God's wisdom. Oh, they may accept *some* of what the Bible says, but in some areas they may disagree and then place their own wisdom above God's wisdom. But then the passage asks who is smart enough to give instruction to the Lord? Obviously no one would claim to do that, but in reality that is what they are doing when they reject *anything* that God has revealed. In effect, they are saying they know better than God, and he needs to accept their wisdom. What arrogance!

**The completed revelation.** In the closing days of Christ's time with his disciples, he made a promise to them. *"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come"* (**John 16:12-13**). Take note that he said the Spirit would reveal "all the truth." If that is true, then there is no "new truth" nor no "new doctrine" that would be revealed in the ages to come. In Jude we find a similar idea presented in these words: *"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints"* (**Jude 3**). "Once for all," meaning "the faith," the system of faith, was given in the first century for all time and for all people. If we can understand the language, that means no new revelations and no additions to "the faith once delivered" (ASV).

Yet what do we see from men? As an example, here is evidence presented concerning the pope of the Roman Catholic Church. In the Roman Catholic dictionary by Lucius Ferraris, entitled *Prompta Bibliotheca Canonica*, Vol. VI, pgs. 438, 442, there is an article entitled "Pope." Among the many claims concerning the person and authority of the pope is this: "The pope can modify divine law, since his power is not of man but of God."

Among the long list of new doctrines announced by various popes through the centuries are the following. Pouring officially substituted for immersion, 1311; Purgatory officially proclaimed as dogma by Council of Florence, 1438; Immaculate conception of Mary, 1584. We could go on for page after page of such changes. But if all these doctrines are true, and matters of faith, what happened to Christ's promise to the disciples in John 16 that *all truth* would be revealed to *them*? A publication from the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic organization is titled, "The Bible Is NOT Our Sole Guide," and features a chapter on "Inadequacy Of The Bible As The Sole Rule of Faith." This flies in the face of everything God said about his revelation!

But this must be the sentiment of every denomination that has books of doctrine besides the Bible. And these books all differ from the Bible, as they differ from one another. *If all we had was the Bible, and we all followed it, then we would be ONE BODY, ONE CHURCH, in keeping with God's plan.*

What did Christ pray for? Unity! *"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me"* (**John 17:20-21**). What we have is division, not unity. Therefore we are not respecting Christ's prayer.

The apostle Paul stated the matter in very simple language. *"There is one body and one Spirit just as also you were called in one hope of your calling one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one*

*God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all*” (**Eph. 4:4-6**). In modern thought, there are thousands of bodies (churches), one Spirit, one Lord, many faiths, several baptisms and one God.

I have never heard of a preacher telling people to worship the god of their choice, or follow the lord of their choice. But time and time again the same preacher may tell people to go to the church of their choice, and choose the kind of baptism they desire (sprinkling, pouring, immersion, sprinkling rose petals, etc.) All this does is produce confusion and division, not the unity that Christ prayed for. Billboards encourage people to “go to the church of your choice.” Would it not better to encourage people to “go the church of God’s choice”?

Does the word of truth teach one church that Jesus is divine (**John 1:1**), but another church that he is not divine, but an angel (Jehovah’s Witnesses)? Does the word of truth teach one church that God is a spirit (**John 4:24**), and does not have a physical body (**Luke 24:39**), but then teach another church that Adam is now God and has a physical body in which he came to earth and had a sexual relationship with Mary, which produced Christ, which means she was not a virgin. (Mormon church).

Then we consider the case of the self-styled prophet of God, Joseph Smith. Concerning polygamy, he claimed he had a revelation from God on July 12, 1843 about “the new and everlasting covenant...including the plurality of wives.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 132**, introduction) This “revelation” gave sanction to a plurality of wives, and “all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same” (**132.3**). This was a “new and an everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not in that covenant, then are ye damned” (**v. 4**). Therefore, this “everlasting covenant” enjoins upon Mormons polygamy. Smith had some 25 or more wives, including a 14-year-old girl.

Many years later, after the Mormons had migrated to Utah Territory, they applied for statehood. The US Congress said they would allow this *if* the Mormon Church would outlaw polygamy. So...the Mormon presidents simply changed the rules and rescinded the “everlasting covenant.”

“Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages,... I hereby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and to use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise.

There is nothing in my teachings to the Church or in those of my associates, during the time specified, which can be reasonably construed to inculcate or encourage polygamy; and when any Elder of the Church has used language which appeared to convey any such teaching, he has been promptly reprov'd. And I now publicly declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the law of the land. “ WILFORD WOODRUFF -- President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (1889 Quotes from church archives)

If what Joseph Smith wrote was an “everlasting covenant,” and those who did not abide in it would be damned, then what happened to allow Woodruff to change it?

We could go on page after page citing countless examples of church doctrines that contradict one another, as well as contradicting the Bible. If this is not what God wants, then it must be the product of the influence of Satan, who is the source of all sin, which includes division and departing from the simple truth that is contained in God’s word.

**II John 9** encourages us to be very careful about God's Word: *"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son."*

Friend, let us be careful to accept the mind and wisdom of God, for he is our Creator and our Savior. Let his wisdom and revelation be our guide. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts"* (**Isaiah 55:8-9**)

Question: Why would ANYONE presume to add doctrines, subtract or change anything that God has written? THEY ARE NOT GOD! I don't understand why God's Word is not sufficient. Consider the words of the inspired apostle Paul: *"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work"* (**II Tim. 3:16-17**). So... why isn't that sufficient? "Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar" (**Prov. 30:6**).  
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### THE ANVIL---GOD'S WORD

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door,  
 And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
 Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor  
 Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,  
 "To wear and batter all these hammers so?"  
 "Just one", said he, and then, with twinkling eye,  
 "The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,  
 For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;  
 Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
 The anvil is unharmed---the hammers gone.

Author Unknown