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## Why Should I Cling to an Old-Fashioned Christ

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# “WHY SHOULD I CLING TO AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRIST?”

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With a frankness almost startling, a youth asked that question the other day. It was progress and new things she wanted. Like so many of the rest of us, she had found that new things are much better than old things. The new television sets, the new cars, the new homes—all superior to those that preceded them. And so she had joined that large group who are convinced that everything old is old-fashioned, out of date, and thus to be discarded for something new.

In the name of progress, this youth and countless others, ask: “Why should I cling to an old-fashioned Christ?” And their tone of

voice unmistakably implies that they don’t expect to receive an answer worth considering. But since the question was asked in the name of progress, let’s look at this thing called “progress.” As soon as we do, we find that **progress depends upon unchanging things**. A known, external, unchanging point is necessary to progress.

Let’s take our best symbol of progress today—the airplane. Nothing better symbolizes our ability to start at one place and take the quick-

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*\*When he preached this sermon in the 1940s, Dr. Robert White Kirkpatrick pastored the First Presbyterian Church, South Boston, Virginia.*

est route to another. Imagine sitting with a young pilot about to take his first cross-country. With a full tank of fuel, he taxis his Cessna 140 down the runway, swings around, opens the throttle, and is airborne.

Look over his shoulder. His eyes sweep the instrument panel, but stop the longest on one instrument: the compass. To make progress toward his goal, he is absolutely dependent on one thing that never changes, the magnetic north.

It's always the same wherever you see progress made over unfamiliar land or water. The traveler uses his sextant to take his bearing from the unchanging orbit of the sun. The sailor sets his course by the North Star, which never moves from its part of the sky. And so it is with each of us who travels through the unknown future. Hoping to reach the goal our heart desires, we must steer by some changeless point in eternity. If you take your bearings in life by



something that constantly changes, or that some day will have to be changed to conform to truth, you may count on making no true progress.

Why set your course by human reason, by the advice of friends, by the line of least resistance, by the dictates of fame and fortune, when every one of these will change? Ships that are steered by weathervanes make no progress; neither do lives that are steered by principles that change.

There is but one unchanging point in eternity, and that is "Jesus Christ . . . the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8, NKJV). Fix your position by the changeless orbit of the Son of God, and set your course by the North Star of Eternity, the Star of Bethlehem. Let the compass of your life point to the magnetic power of him who said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32, KJV).

But also, an unchanging point of control within is necessary to progress. Where there is nothing but change, there is no progress. Take an automobile wheel by itself and start it rolling down the highway. Every part of it is constantly changing position—and because there is nothing but change within the wheel, it soon ends up in the ditch. But let that wheel revolve around a fixed point, an axle, and let that axle be responsive to a fixed aim in the

mind of a driver, and that wheel will move him mile after mile toward even the most distant goal.

You and I are like that. It is the unchanging things in our life that enable us to make progress. Think of the things that normally never change in your best friend—his friendship, his sense of honor, his love of worthwhile things, his level-headedness. Then think of a person who gives you a hearty greeting one day, and a cold stare the next; who is scrupulously honest today, and tomorrow laughingly betrays the most sacred trust; who tells you one thing today and another tomorrow. He is the one you know won't make steady progress, while you're sure your friend will. It is the unchanging things in your life and mine that give us the ability to progress. To what can you point in your life that never changes, that never has changed, that never will change? So few things! Let your life revolve around the matchless life and ideals of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, and you will make steady progress toward your goal. Whatever your calling, you cannot but be successful in the truest sense; you cannot but progress the most surely, if the point of control in your life is the Christ who never changes.

But even though a person is not interested in further progress, even though all he desires is to continue just as he is, he soon finds that secu-

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urity depends upon fixed, unchanging things. If the earth under our feet began to shift, none of us would feel secure; if the seasons of the year began to follow one another in haphazard order, or if the value of the dollars should begin to fluctuate from day to day in a marked and unpredictable way, security in physical things would be gone. Our security in life depends on unchanging foundations, unchanging fundamentals.

A four-year-old girl of my acquaintance had a cactus plant that she pulled up every day to see how its roots were getting on. Now, a cactus plant can stand a great deal of change, all kinds of pruning, a new environment, but when you get down to the fundamental thing of its existence, its roots, and change there, you threaten its very security. So it is with us. We can accommodate all kinds of changes in the superstructure of our life, but when we get down to the things on which our life rests, we need something that will never shift under our weight, no matter how great the

strain.

Changes in our life will come, changes that will strike at the very depths of our soul and destroy our security, unless it's supported by something that never changes. Again and again life will deal a blow of terrible severity—a prize we had sought, snatched from our grasp; the fulfillment of a dream for which we had labored and sacrificed for years shattered before our eyes in a moment of time; or standing beside a newly made grave, and, as a nightmare that cannot be true, seeing our life's dearest human treasure gone! Some day when your world is reeling and tumbling, when your heart aches with all the pain it can hold, you are going to reach out a groping hand for something secure. Where on Earth will you find a power that will steady you in that hour? You will find it in the same hand that reached out to Simon Peter and steadied him so that he could walk even on the fragile surface of the Sea of Galilee—the hand of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

But you're going to need that

*But, after all, who said Christ was old-fashioned?*

*Actually, Jesus is God's model of what humankind will be like in eternity. God showed him to the world before we entered eternity. Does that make him old-fashioned until a newer and better Son of God takes his place?*

*Such a time will never come!*

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strong hand for your security every day, not merely in the dark hours of your life; you're going to need it to give you the mastery over temptations that seek that one weak moment when they can bring you to a day of bitter regret. The days when you are moving up the ladder of success in friendship, in popularity, in money, in honors, in the knowledge of service rendered and of work well done—those days when you are highest, you still need that steady hand for the trial. You cannot keep your footing if you hold merely to popularity, money, ability, friendships, or even self-control. Every one of them will fail you at some time. Rather, steady yourself by taking every day the hand of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Because there is a just God in heaven, and because of the sins that are yours, you are going to need, *you need now, to have your hand in the hand of the Saviour*. Without your hand in His, there can be no security for you in the sight of God—now, or

ever—for he tells us there is “no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved”—but only the name of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This world and the things that make it up will pass away someday—and if the staff of your life has been these things that will not endure, you will have nothing to support you in the day when you stand in the cold light of eternity, with your whole life bared before the Almighty God, awaiting, helpless and alone, the awful verdict of the Judge. But if you have steadied your life on Jesus Christ here on Earth, when you hear your name called, you will also hear the words from the Recording Angel: “The charges once written here are canceled. They have been blotted out with drops of blood.” You look up and see that the Judge is Jesus Christ, the same Christ whom you made the support of your life here. He was your friend and he is your

friend, and once again he holds out his hand to you as he says to all the host of heaven: "This is one of my brothers to whom I gave power to become a son of God because he believed on my name. Welcome to the place I have prepared for you." In that day we shall value above all else Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Why should I cling to an old-fashioned Christ? Because progress depends upon having an unchanging point outside yourself by which you may steer; because progress depends upon having an unchanging point of control within, around which your life may revolve; because your security in this world and the next, in the eyes of human beings and in the eyes of God, will never shift, whatever strain you place upon it; because Jesus Christ is the one foundation in this universe that you can be absolutely sure is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

But, after all, who said Christ was old-fashioned? Actually, Jesus is God's model of what humankind will be like in eternity. God showed him to the world before we entered eternity. Does that make him old-fashioned until a newer and better

Son of God takes his place? Such a time will never come! God has only one Son, and in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. Jesus Christ is as new-fashioned as eternity.

But for a moment let's suppose that Christ *is* old-fashioned? So is the Sun; so are the stars; so are the rain clouds; yet what would we do without them? Old-fashioned? Why, so is love, and yet we thrill anew each day to the magic of its touch. Old-fashioned? So is sorrow, with its glistening eyes and breaking heart—its groping hand reached upward. Old-fashioned? So is sin—with all its blackness of despair, with all its need of a Saviour. Old-fashioned? So is death. It still wears the same label shroud it wore 40 centuries ago. It still has the same grim visage and the same icy breath.

Old-fashioned? Why, life itself where it is most real is old-fashioned. Where we reach down to the bedrock of life; where we live and feel most truly life never changes. And our deepest needs are as old and as old-fashioned as our first parents. They are changeless needs, and for these changeless needs there is a changeless Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Make him yours today. □

