

## The Changing Face of the Church

Visiting the Museum of London recently I was struck by their dramatic presentation of the cause and effects of the great Fire of London. Within the presentation were drawings of London prior to the fire, together with the great changes after much reconstruction had taken place. We often use the phrase 'the changing face of ...' to indicate the considerable change or alteration that has taken place, eg., in a city development or some landscape that is no longer as we remembered it. Such changes are inevitable with developing technology, or in the case of London after the fire, out of necessity.

One of the great biblical doctrine that describe God's character in the Bible is His 'immutability'. That may sound a strange word to our minds but it simply means that God does not change in His character. His truth does not alter. None of the doctrines concerning His salvation change to suit new cultures. However, although God's word does not change, many within the Church are changing His message. False teachers have always operated within the Church to change 'the face of the Church'. Often the false teaching is obvious and easily recognizable, but often is hard to distinguish from the real thing!

God's 'grace' in the gospel message, ie., the 'favour' and 'gift' of forgiveness of sins through Christ's atoning death (to be received by 'faith') was never intended to release us from the obligation to keep God's laws. Indeed, such grace was given that we might keep the law of God with greater ardour and intention! Do not think God's grace gives you a 'free ticket' into heaven while you treat His laws with careless indifference! Jesus said, "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." Matthew 7:21

Pastor J Lowe