

Rising Toward the Bright Sweetness



Adaptation Over Immutability

Ordinarily, people seem to favor consistency over change. In politics the incumbent typically wins; in institutions the inventive idea is often met with, "That's not how we do things around here." In churches we want to hold onto pastors who have been there a long time, preferring their known foibles over those of anyone unfamiliar. And in our own life most of us will prefer the old familiar routine over anything new and potentially inconvenient.

It seems to be a part of our culture, established even in the minds of the young. Paging through one of my old high school yearbooks, try as I might I cannot find any notations that say, "I look forward to seeing what you become," or, "I just bet you will have changed for the better in twenty years." Instead I find the saccharine litany, "Good luck to a great guy!" and, "Always stay as you are—never change," and, "You're a great kid, so stay that way!"

Well, I can say with some accuracy that after forty years, I have most definitely changed: in some respects for the worse, but mostly for the better. I may have substantially added to my

girth, and deducted from my pate, but thank goodness I am no longer that pimply faced class clown, chronically unsteady around the fairer sex, and more interested in extra-curricular activities than actually learning anything.

Oddly, however, man seems to take a different tack when establishing a relationship with God. While in our more mundane living we favor consistency over change, in our dealings with God we favor adaptation over immutability. Uncomfortable with His eternally unchanging character, we set out to re-mold Him into our own image.

Remaking the Maker

We live in a world that, if it cares about God at all, cares only to redefine Him into a benevolent buddy who abides by its standards. Instead of seeking a God who exists on His own terms—a God who can offer a firm foundation against the quicksand of man's idiocy—this world seeks only to pursue a God of its own making.

Many people doggedly avoid any search for God for fear of what they'll find at their goal. The result of their search will surely be uncomfortable, they surmise, and certainly inconvenient. God the Father is too holy and detached, they assume, and Jesus the Son is too dated to be of any use to this present age.

Their ignorance aside, the believer cannot thrust a bony finger of condemnation at the world without first pointing it at himself. Sadly, this reluctance to take God as He is has a comfortable dwelling place even within the body of Christ.

Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.

Jeremiah 18:3-4

The bright sweetness of God cannot be enjoyed after it has been dulled by any of the earth's abrasive darkness. Indeed, by such treatment it is rendered unrecognizable. And it is the height of man's arrogance to presume to refashion an omnipotent, omniscient, eternal God. To remake God is to reduce Him (in the mind) to a small god—that is, no God at all, but a mere idol. Of what earthly good is a god fashioned from the soil? What profit is there in rising toward someone already lower than oneself? For, by its very nature, whatever is fashioned by man is something lower than he who made it; the creator is always superior to the thing created.

To change God from what He is, is to set man above Him. And any attempt to change Him is to say, "I will remain who I am, and bring God down to my level." To change God is to reverse the universal order of our being, for, in His universe, *He* is the one who creates and refashions.

Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."

Jeremiah 18:5-6

Much of our difficulty as seeking Christians stems from our unwillingness to take God as He is and adjust our lives accordingly. We insist upon trying to modify Him and to bring Him nearer to our own image. The flesh whimpers against the rigor of God's inexorable sentence and begs like Agag for a little mercy, a little indulgence of its carnal ways. It is no use. We can get a right start only by accepting God as He is and learning to love Him for what He is. As we go on to know Him better we shall find it a source of unspeakable joy that God is just what He is. Some of the most rapturous moments we know will be those we spend in reverent admiration of the Godhead. In those holy moments the very thought of change in Him will be too painful to endure. So let us begin with God. Back of all, above all, before all is God; first in sequential order, above in rank and station, exalted in dignity and honor.

A.W. Tozer

Unchanged

God *does* stoop to our level—as He did most dramatically at the cross—but it is only to reach down and lift us up to Him. He will not be soiled by earth and flesh—that was the *point* of the cross. His desire is to bring us into the paradise of His dwelling—to restore the bright sweetness He once enjoyed with His creation.

We may squander our precious opportunities for communion by vainly trying to modify God's personality and character. We may remain stiff-lipped and arrogant, demanding that He bow to our wishes. We may remain stubborn and resolute, waiting for Him to reconcile His precepts to our more manageable traditions. But in that we will ultimately lose, and God will remain what He always has been.

Unchanged.



(Next week: *Born With the Yearning*)