

The Continuing Need for Adjustment

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of continual adjustment in our understanding of God to avoid the limitations of fixed ideas and to pursue a deeper relationship with Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 43:19, Matthew 9:17, John 16:13, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:15, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:10, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Flexibility in Faith"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the ongoing need for spiritual adjustment in our understanding of God, warning against the dangers of fixed ideas and traditionalism that can limit our relationship with Him. He reflects on how Israel's captivity and the struggles of Christ's disciples stemmed from rigid conceptions that obstructed their spiritual growth. Sparks argues that while foundational truths remain unchanged, our interpretations and methods must be flexible to accommodate deeper revelations from God. He calls for believers to seek the true life of God beyond the confines of established doctrines, urging a commitment to continual growth and understanding in Christ. Ultimately, the goal is to know Him more fully, which requires a willingness to adjust and embrace new insights.

Transcript

From time to time, right through the ages, those who have stood in quite a definite relationship to the things of God have either been seduced, or have drifted, or have for some reason come to fixed and systematized positions as to the ways, works, and purposes of God - which fixed ideas have come to limit Him, bind them, and result in going round in a circle instead of on a direct course of ever-enlarging and clarifying spiritual fullness and newness.

This propensity for fixedness and finality in conceptions has threatened the people of God many times with a fatal impasse. Indeed, Israel's captivity and eventual disintegration among the nations, with all the agony of centuries, very largely rests upon their fixed idea of being so right as God's elect. This same peril threatened to frustrate the real spiritual way and purpose of God with Christ's own disciples. Because of Jewish ideas interpreted by their natural minds they had prejudices and preconceptions which menaced their spiritual lives and constantly came into conflict with Christ's mind and way. Paul's life and ministry was continually opposed by this element, and he himself in his pre-conversion days is a supreme example of its danger.

So it has been through the ages since, and is one of the greatest hindrances to the quicker realization of the thought and purpose of the Lord in our times. The fact is that God must not move or do anything which does not conform to the accepted and recognized order of traditional evangelical Christianity. Anything that is outside of a prescribed circle of what has been done and how it has been done for generations is suspect and boycotted. The official bodies of organized evangelical Christianity are the final court of appeal. While there are those foundational facts which are in their essence unalterable and unchanging, there is always, in everything that comes from God, a wealth and fullness of meaning and value which is commensurate with its infinite Source and Fountainhead; and the Spirit of truth can continually make us know that God's meaning infinitely transcends our apprehension.

We must therefore never box the compass of truth or interpretation and fix our methods and framework of doctrine or work in a way that makes it impossible for the Lord to show us that, although a certain way of outworking was all right for the time being, it was only relatively so, and fuller light means further adjustments. All this, not because the Lord is developing or changing, but because we can only move and change by life, organically, as we grow in understanding.

We venture to say that a time has begun when the old and fixed positions of traditional Christianity are losing their hold on, not only the Christian public in general, but many sincere seekers for reality... something not to be found in many of the churches; and what they are looking for is the real and true life of God.

The question which confronts us all is this: can the Lord lead us on into His fullness in Christ without continually bumping up against something in our own carryover of, not fixed truth but our fixed limit of its meaning; or something in our fixedness of position in any direction or connection? Steadfastness, unmovableness, faithfulness, etc., are to be to the Lord and to the foundation realities of the faith, and also in the purpose for which and to which He has called us in life and service; but adjustableness is an essential to growth and increase in light and fullness. At the same time, we cannot change and move on only as there is a basic work of the Cross by which the strength of nature, even as it impinges upon Divine things, is set aside.

The Lord find us such as have only one object, and that truly at any cost: "That I may know Him."

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