

Confessions of an April Fool

I don't know about you, but if I had been alive in Rome in 1582, I would probably have been one of the original April fools.

In that year, Pope Gregory XIII decided that the calendar needed to be changed to align better with the solar year. The current Julian calendar was off about 11 minutes and 14 seconds a year, which by the year 1582 added up to about 10 days too many. In order to fix this error, Gregory proposed a radical solution. On October 4th, 1582 we assume everyone went to bed as usual. But when they woke up the next morning, it was October 15th. Ten days were lost forever. Holidays, birthdays and anniversaries were reset to ten days later. New Years was moved from April 1 to January 1 and the new Gregorian calendar was officially adopted in Rome.



As you can imagine, some people did not easily accept this change. A few thought it was a trick to get them to pay a full month's rent for only 20 days occupancy. Others couldn't see the need for the change and some people, especially those in rural areas, never even heard about it. Perhaps a handful resisted the change just because it *was* change, difficult and confusing.

Because of this widespread resistance, the new calendar was not fully accepted for many years. Those who clung to the old system and celebrated New Years on April 1 were scoffed at and called "fools" by the more progressive Romans.

My sympathies lie firmly with the traditionalists. Though some people thrive on change, many of us fear it. The more invasive the change, the more we avoid it. So how do we April-fool types learn to respond to change in a way that honors God?

Accept that change is inevitable. The Bible teaches us that life is "a vapor, which appears for a little time, and then disappears" (James 4:14). Is anything more changeable than a vapor? And yet there is a part of us

that—sullenly and against common sense—expects our life to go on just as it is forever. Accepting the biblical truth that change is inevitable will free us from the feeling of surprise and even betrayal when circumstances do change (and they will).

Agree that change is commanded. All through the Bible, God commands his people to repent—to change their minds and actions to conform to His holiness in cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

For you ought to put off the old man (according to your way of living before) who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, And you should put on the new man, who according to God *was* created in righteousness and true holiness. Eph. 4:22-24

Understand that change is desirable. Most of us are familiar with Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to those who love the Lord, who are called according to His purpose." But when seemingly-tragic changes come, it's difficult to see them from God's perspective. In "Don't Waste Your Cancer", an article written by Pastor John Piper after his own cancer diagnosis, he says:

What God permits, He permits for a reason. And that reason is His design. If God foresees molecular developments becoming cancer, He can stop it or not. If He does not, He has a purpose. Since He is infinitely wise, it is right to call this purpose a design.

Piper knows, as we all should, that every circumstance in our life comes from the hand of the Father and is specifically designed to work for our good and the glory of God.

Cling to the unchangeable. The uncertainty of this life does not need to leave us feeling anxious and uneasy. God told His people, "For I am Jehovah, I change not." (Mal. 3:6). The author of Hebrews says that Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Ultimately, any change in circumstance in this life is enduring if we rest on an unchanging God.

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