

# 你是陶匠我是土

You are the Potter; I am the Clay



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A friend of mine sent me an email about a Tea Cup that talks to a customer who is going to buy it.

The tea cup said that it was originally just a lump of red clay. But its master took it and rolled it, pounded it, and patted it over and over and it yelled out, 'Don't do that. I don't like it! Let me alone,' but the master only smiled, and gently said, 'Not yet!' Then it was placed on a spinning wheel and spun around and around and around. The clay felt dizzy. Then the clay was put in the oven, where the tea cup was burned. Then it was painted. The fume from the paint smelt horrible. Then it was sent to another oven to be burned again. In each of these steps, the future tea cup protested profusely, asking the master to stop. But the master just smiled. In the end, all the work was done, and the beautiful cup was made.

At this time, the master started to speak: "I know it hurt to be rolled and pounded and patted, but had I just left you alone, you'd have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I hadn't done that, you would not have had any color in your life. If I hadn't put you back in that second oven, you wouldn't have survived for long because the hardness would not have held. Now you are a finished product. Now you are what I had in mind when I first began with you."

There is a hymn that says God is the potter, we are the clay. God shapes our lives in miraculous ways. Isn't the story of the tea cup a perfect example of the ways God works in our lives?

In China, almost all schoolchildren are taught to recite the following passage:

"Before Heaven trusts a man with a great responsibility, it always frustrates his will, exhausts his muscles and bones, exposes him to starvation and poverty, and hardens him with troubles and difficulties. This will cultivate his spirit, molds his mind and strengthens his abilities."

In reflecting on my life so far, I remember all the frustration, the exhaustion, the poverty, the troubles, the difficulties, just like the tea cup remembers the hands that mold it, the wheel that spins it, the oven that burns it, and the paint that suffocates it. I am not at all sure if I will grow into a man of great worldly success. I am not at all sure if great responsibilities will be bestowed on my shoulders. Still I will be thankful for the growing spiritual maturity I can get from all those situations. We often have difficulty understanding why we have to endure hardships. Hardships are hard! But there is a time for everything, even hardships. Just as one day there will be a time when there is going to be no more tears, no more hardships, and no more heartbreak. There will be a time when there is nothing but things that give us joy.

朋友寄来一封电子邮件，说了一个茶杯的故事。有一天，一个顾客去商店，看到一个美丽的茶杯，他想给买下来。这时候茶杯开口说话了。

茶杯说它一开始不是茶杯，而是一团红色黏土。但陶匠拿起它来，揉之、摔之、拍之、捏之。它很难受，叫喊说：“不要这样。我不喜欢！离开我！”陶匠笑而不语。然后黏土又被放到陶轮上转动起来。黏土被转得头昏眼花。然后它又被放入窑里烧。出窑后，陶匠又开始上釉。那气味异常刺鼻。不久又再次入窑烧。这过程中的每一步，未来的茶杯都抗议不止，总在要求陶匠停手。陶匠依旧笑而不语。最后，所有工作完成，一只美丽的杯子出现在人们面前。

这时候，陶匠开口了：“我知道你不喜拍打揉捏，可是不这样你会干掉而不能成坯。我知道旋转让你头晕，可是不旋转你无以成型。我知道入窑火热难耐，但是不烧你无以坚固。我知道上釉气味难闻，可是不上釉你会粗糙难看。我知道再次入窑仍然酷热难耐，可是如果不再烧你会容易碎裂。现在你才是成品，才是我当初设想的模样。”

有首赞美诗唱到上帝是陶匠，我们是黏土。确实，上帝也一样在塑造我们。茶杯的故事不正是上帝塑造我们的完美比喻？

在中国，我们小的时候大概都背诵过下面这一段话：“天将降大任于斯人也，必先苦其心志，劳其筋骨，饿其体肤，空乏其身，行拂乱其所为，所以动心忍性，增益其所不能。”

回过头反思自己的生活，我还记得各种失望、疲惫、贫穷、困扰、艰难，就如同茶杯忘不了那拍打、旋转、火烧、上釉。而且按照常见的标准，日后我也未必有重任让我来挑。但我知道，上帝用各种场合锻炼我，塑造我。日后无法飞黄腾达那又何妨，我所经历的一切磨练都会增加我属灵的成熟，而承继天国，岂不也是一种天降的大任，要我们去承担呢？我们往往难以理解我们为什么要忍受磨难。磨难并不好受！但万物有时。顺有时，不顺也有时。永生也有时，那了那时，我们将不会再有困苦和患难，眼泪和悲伤。